FAMILY DEVOTIONS FOR *SUNDAY EVENINGS*, Throughout the YEAR.

BEING

Practical Discourses,

WITH

Suitable Prayers.

Volume I.

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Ra. Barker.

THE PREFACE.

IF I *ſhould here make a long Diſcourſe on the Neceſſity, the Importance, the Uſefulneſs of Family worſhip, and ſet my ſelf by many Arguments to urge the performance of it; I ſhould do but what is already excellently well done, in a late Book Entituled,* Domeſtick Devotions for the Uſe of private Families, and particular Perſons. *And I think that to add ſome farther aſſiſtance and direction for the more eaſie and uſeful performance of it than what is there done, is all that is neceſſary to be added to that Book, for the better promoting of the good and uſeful Deſign of it; I ſhall therefore ſay but little to this purpoſe.*

We have (thanks be to God) a great many good and practical Diſcourſes in the common Language; but they are not all ſo fit for the profitable performance of this Exerciſe, as ſome are. Thoſe long Diſcourſes, which cannot be finiſht at one reading, and which have the parts of them well connected, and depending upon each other, both for the better underſtanding and the uſefulneſs of them, are fitter and more uſeful for the retired Meditation of ſuch as are already well taught in Divine matters, and as have leiſure to ſit a good while over them. And I believe ſuch ſhort Diſcourſes as theſe, which have little or no dependance upon each other, and may be finiſht at one reading, are more fit for the Family.

Beſides (though I am very ſorry for it) I judge ſuch ſhort Diſcourſes moſt agreeable to the genius of the time, which is not very patient of much reading or long thinking upon any thing, through the Cuſtome of neglecting theſe: While it has been the ill Faſhion to do ſo, and we have affected to be idle, vitious and witty, rather than to be uſeful, vertuous and wiſe. But yet this alſo may be ſaid for ſhort Diſcourſes, that all that which is very pertinent to any Subject, and which is important and neceſſary to it, may be contained in a little Room, eſpecially when the Subject is ſo particular as theſe are. And though ſeveral long Treatiſes have been written upon ſome of theſe; yet I believe whoever does well conſider them, he will find that whatever is moſt pertinent and important to be ſaid to them, or the greateſt part of it, is contained in one of theſe. And if this be indeed done (as I have endeavoured and deſigned it ſhould be) then I may believe theſe will find thoſe to whom they will be acceptable, as long as there are any that value their money as the moſt do, or their time as all ſhould do. And eſpecially may this be, becauſe (as I doubt not to ſay) this way of writing is more profitable and uſeful than the other. For when a Subject is copiouſly handled, 'tis very ſeldom diſtinctly and accurately explained; and beſides, the Thoughts are diſtracted with the multitude of things which are brought into the Diſcourſe; ſo that the true and proper Subject of it muſt needs have the leſs efficacy and impreſſion upon the Mind. And ſince the laſting and ſteady Efficacy of what is ſaid to any Subject in Divinity depends upon the ſerious, repeated, and deliberate Meditation on it; but when ſuch long Diſcourſes come to be very deliberately conſidered, they appear to contain many

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weak and false Arguments, and many things impertinent to the matter; then, though they were fit and able perhaps to raise a sudden flash of warm Affections; yet, they prove unfit and uncapable to make a well setled and solid Change and Impression on the Mind and Life. And this I doubt not is observed by others as well as my self, concerning some of the late practical Books that are popular among us. To conclude this matter; I could perhaps say so much to recommend and justifie this way of writing practical Divinity as would make the Preface half as long as the Book; but besides, that all the Reasons of this Design are not fit to be expresst, I must also take care not to make the Preface long, while I contrive every thing else to be as short as is possible.

I therefore heartily recommend the reading of some such practical Discourse, as one of these, together with the offering up to Almighty God the Evening Sacrifice of a suitable Prayer, on the Evening of the Lord's Day; in a little Assembly of the particular Family. Such an Exercise as this, I am sure may very well be performed in Cities and great Towns; where they have much time to spare on this Day, besides that which the publick Worship employs, and they commonly spend it very ill. And in the Country Villages I know it to be very frequently necessary; and that they, too, have for the greatest part of the Year, at least, time enough for this in the Afternoon, notwithstanding the necessary Cares and Business of Husbandry; because many things commonly hinder them from attending more than once on a day at the publick Worship, which would not hinder but that they might spend an hour in reading and praying together with their Families at home.

And this certainly they ought to do rather than ſpend the whole Afternoon in ſloth or worldly buſineſs, as too many do to their Eternal prejudice. Beſides, very often the Neceſſity of ancient People that cannot go far, or of ſick Perſons that dare not go out, will require the help which they might have from ſuch an Exerciſe at home. I think I have ſo contrived the following Diſcourſes, as that the whole Exerciſe may be performed in an hours ſpace: And that I am ſure no Perſon who has already any ſenſe and reliſh of Devotion, can think too much to be thus ſpent on this Day, beſides the publick Worſhip, tho' they have had opportunity of twice attending upon that; and for thoſe that have not ſuch a ſenſe, I hope ſo ſhort a performance will be uſeful to poſſeſs them with it by degrees, and will not be in danger to tire them. Beſides, there is in the keeping a Family together for this purpoſe, the advantage of keeping them out of the way of miſchief and temptation, which when they are diſperſt they are expoſed to. I muſt confeſs it is my opinion that the general reviving of ſuch a practice as this, is abſolutely neceſſary to the reviving and recovery of us, from the deplorable decay of Chriſtian Piety that has been of late years among us; and that I believe it the moſt conducing and uſeful thing in order thereto that can poſſibly be advanced among us; beſides the wholſome and moſt edifying Rules and Orders of the eſtabliſht Church.

As for thoſe that labour hard all the Week, if they let themſelves looſe to worldly pleaſure on the Lord's day, they commonly intoxicate themſelves with it, they grow too much into the love of it, and are apt to fall from thence into the frequent neglects of their worldly buſineſs on other days, that they

they may run to it. And this brings them into poverty, and that into the Sins which it usually tempts men to, and so they fall into ruine and misery. Pleasure is too luscious a thing commonly for them who are so little taught to govern themselves in it, as they are who spend their time in labour, and the less they have of it beyond necessary refreshment, usually the wiser and the happier they are. And if such Persons make the Lord's day a religious Rest only, this would sufficiently relieve them after their labours, would keep them out of the Snares of the Devil, it would maintain and keep up a spirit of Industry and Diligence in them, and would render them much more ready and willing to return to the Duties of their worldly Callings, than they are commonly apt to be after a long and licentious enjoyment of worldly pleasure. If this practice were set up in the Families of our Nobility and Gentry, it would in all likelihood mightily encrease in them all Vertue and Piety, and by consequence true Greatness, Happiness and Honour. I earnestly recommend this Book to the Gentry also, to be distributed by them among their poor Tenants in the Country Villages, where I know such Books to be exceedingly wanted. Let them that labour to improve your Estates and to maintain you in ease and plenty receive some kindness from you. And if they are worthy to do so, I suppose you cannot think upon the matter, but you must soon determine that what may be a kindness to their Souls, is of greatest importance.

With the general recovery and encrease of sensible powerful Religion upon the Hearts of Men, How much good, how much happiness would follow to the whole Nation! This would do more than all disputes to bring us to one mind in Religion, to cure

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Schiſms and Hereſies, and Differences of Opinion, and to allay thoſe Animoſities, Contentions and Emulations among us, which are the conſequences of them. If we were all better Chriſtians, there would be more obedience to the Laws and Orders of the Church and the State, and leſs diſputing of them; and we ſhould be better Subjects and better Neighbours, and the common Cauſes of our dividing into ſo many ſeparate and diſtinct Intereſts would be removed. The World ever has found and ever will find it true, that Righteouſneſs exalts, and Sin is a reproach to any People: And we cannot expect to excel our Neighbours in any thing elſe if we do not excel them in Piety and Vertue. I doubt not to ſay, that all our preſent Dangers, Diſadvantages and Diſparagements proceed from the decay of true and pure Religion among us, and would be removed with the recovery of that.

I purpoſe (God willing) to add three Volumes more to this, with as many Diſcourſes in each to make up a Courſe for the whole Year; for which I ſhall chuſe ſuch Subjects as the Neceſſity of theſe Times does chiefly require. Only theſe things I think fit to ſay of them; That as this Volume is deſigned and directed, merely to ſerve and promote true and pure Religion, without any concern for a particular party, ſo I intend the reſt ſhall be of the ſame Character. And alſo, that though I muſt and do expect ſome will deſpiſe them for their want of Philoſophick terms and phraſes, which are things I have indeed with labour avoided; yet it comforts me againſt this, to believe alſo, that among the moſt Learned and pious Cenſurers there will ſome be found, that will even for this very reaſon like them the better, and, I hope, recommend them: Eſpecially if it does

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but appear to them, that the ſenſe is not ſo common or vulgar as the words.

I have added a Prayer to each Diſcourſe ſuitable to the Subject inſiſted on: And I have done this not to help thoſe that cannot pray beſt without a Form (which is an Apology built upon miſtake) but becauſe no man can poſſibly pray beſt in his common ordinary courſe, without a compoſed premeditated Form, which ſhould be made either by himſelf, or by ſome other for him; we have ſo much infirmity in us all, that he does certainly offer the blind, and the lame, and the ſick to God in his Sacrifice of Prayer and Praiſe, who truſts to ſudden Thoughts and Expreſſions. And of ſuch Prayers it may very well be ſaid, what the Prophet ſpeaks of ſuch Sacrifices under the Law, Mal. 1. 8. Offer it now to thy Governour, will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept your Perſons, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts? *Would you offer any Petition to a Prince in this way, or would he accept it if you ſhould? Can you think he ſhould rather regard you for rudeneſs and vehemency, than if you take care to ask with a due reverence and reſpect to him? And ſhould we not much rather compoſe our Petitions carefully which we offer to the Lord of Hoſts, the King of Kings, than we do thoſe we offer to an earthly Prince? Why does he compoſe his Addreſs to a King, and write it down and conſider it before hand, who will not do thus much with his Prayer to Almighty God? Every Maſter of a Family then ſhould have a Set of Prayers for his Family for ordinary uſe; and thoſe, if he muſt exerciſe his own Gifts, ſhould be of his own compoſing. But if he judges thoſe that are compoſed by ſome Miniſter more uſeful and profitable to himſelf and his Family, than any that he can compoſe (as*

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we have ſeveral Books with ſuch Prayers in them printed among us) or if he thinks thoſe compoſed by a Combination and Conſult of Miniſters, as our publick Prayers *were, to be ſo, he ought without doubt to uſe the one or the other of theſe. And if he does not ſo, that rebuke is applicable to him, of having* a Male in his Flock, and of vowing and offering to the Lord a corrupt thing, *Mal.* 1. 14. *of not doing that which he can beſt do in the performance of his duty. He certainly is wanting in that reverence which is due to the great God, who reproves ſuch offerings with this Argument in that place;* For I am a great King, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen. *Reverence requires that we render him the beſt ſervice we can. And he may juſtly ſuſpect himſelf for pride and vain Glory in affecting to ſhew his own parts and abilities, rather than to do that which is moſt convenient, who does not chuſe to pray by a compoſed Form. If extraordinary Occaſions happen to his Family, he ſhould either do as* David *did (who certainly was an excellent pattern) who compoſed particular Devotions for ſuch particular occaſions, as we may ſee by the Titles of ſeveral of the* Pſalms: *Or elſe he ſhould find out in ſome Book of Devotion, or deſire of ſome Miniſter a* Prayer *for ſuch a particular occaſion.*

Our Saviour himſelf in the Hiſtory of his Family by the Evangeliſts, has left a pattern of this laſt ſort which may juſtly be regarded, as a direction in this caſe both by Miniſters and People: *His Diſciples deſired him to teach them to pray; he complyed with their Deſire, and did ſo by compoſing a Form for them. It is without doubt part of the Duty of his Miniſters in the Church after this example of*

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the great Paſtour, to teach the faithful People to pray, and this they may do in the ſame way as he did, and the People ſhall certainly do well if they uſe the Prayers which ſuch have compoſed for them: Thus they ſhall be edified and profited by the Gifts which God has communicated to his Miniſters. Whatever Gift or Spirit of Prayer can reaſonably be pretended to be afforded the Church in theſe days; it may be exerciſed in the compoſing and writing down our Prayers before we offer them to God; and there is no man but muſt needs exerciſe his Gift more ſuitably to the great God he worſhips, and more to his own or other Peoples edification, and to a better degree of performance, truly, in this way, than in depending upon ſudden and unpremeditated Thoughts and Expreſſions. So that without doubt, both Miniſters and People ought to uſe compoſed Forms of Prayer ordinarily, to perform this duty in the fitteſt manner. I ſhall only add to this matter thus much; that if any Maſter of a Family uſes theſe Prayers in his Family, it is but as if he ſhould deſire a Miniſter to pray with them, as People are commonly wont to do, when ſuch a Perſon happens to ſtay a Night at their Houſe. And I have ſaid ſo much to this matter, becauſe I have obſerved the unjuſt and erroneous diſparaging of Prayer by a Form, which has been amongſt us, has had a great influence towards the too frequent omiſſion of Family Worſhip.

Now to conclude this Preface, I ſhall only ſuggeſt theſe advices concerning the uſe of this Book: That it is, as I think, ordinarily moſt fitting that this Exerciſe be performed by the Maſter of the Family himſelf: But if any Circumſtances hinder that, it may be done by a Child or Servant, but ſhould al-

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ways be done in his presence, if possible, that his Authority may give it the more respect with the inferiour parts of the Family. When the introductory Prayer *is said, all should be standing, to make themselves sensible of the* Presence *of God, and to dispose them to a reverent and serious frame of Mind, and so to make the more solemn and fit enterance upon what they are going about. The latter* Prayer *should be used by all the* Company *kneeling, and joining in it with heart and devout Affection.*

If any young Persons, *who are devoutly inclined, have it their lot to live under such Governours of their Families, as are negligent of their duty in this matter; I advise them, if they may be permitted it, to spend an hour in their Chamber alone on the Lord's Day, in these Meditations and* Prayers: *This they may very profitably do, and perhaps their good Example in such a practice may shame the Master of the Family out of his neglect.*

Now I commit this Endeavour to the Providence *of God, humbly dedicating it to his service: And I do most willingly say,* Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the Glory, for thy loving Mercy, and thy Truths sake. *And that it may be accepted with him through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, and accompanied with his powerful Blessing; so as it may also be well accepted in the Church, and successful to the promoting of true and pure Religion in many Souls, to their Comfort and Salvation, and his Glory thereby, I heartily pray.*

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THE EXCELLENCY OF THE SOUL.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O *Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Amen.

Zach. 12. Last Part of the First *Verse.*

And formeth the Spirit of Man within him.

THE Words that I have now read from the Holy Scripture, are part of a very Majestick Preface or Introduction to a favourable Prophecy concerning *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, which is understood to foretell the Times of the *Maccabees*; the distresses

of those times, and the mighty Deliverances which God would give the *Jews* by the Conduct and Courage, and Resolution of those Men. In so great and lofty Expressions, the Prophet was directed to introduce it, that he might encourage the Faith, and raise the Expectations of that People, who were now in a very weak and low Condition: For they were but newly returned from their Captivity, and were envied, and hated, and opposed in their present Interests by wicked and powerful Neighbours. He reminds them herein of the great Works of that God in whom he would have them now put their trust. The whole *Verse* and *Preface* contains thus much; *The Burden of the Word of the Lord for* Israel, *saith the Lord, Who stretcheth forth the Heavens, and layeth the Foundations of the Earth, and formeth the Spirit of Man within him.*

That which we may observe in this Text is; That the Prophet places this work of God, *His forming the Spirit of Man within him*, together with his stretching out the wide and spacious Heaven, and his laying the Foundations of the ponderous Earth; and that, when he design'd to represent the Greatness of God, his ability and fitness to do what he had promised, by shewing them the works he had already done. This then we may reckon is here intimated to be a work parallel with those that are mentioned with it, and fit to be mention'd with them to the same purpose: This is a great and mighty Work as well as the other two. All God's Works of Creation do declare their Authors Greatness, and (as the Psalmist speaks) *Praise him.* But some do this more than others

thers as they are more excellent, and greater than others. Elsewhere also the Scripture mentions the making of Man as one of the more excellent and wonderful Works of God, and sets it together with his making the Earth, and stretching out the Heavens: As, in *Isa.* 45. 12. where God, to magnify himself in the Esteem of that People, and to assure them that he could raise up one that should deliver them from Captivity, says by his Prophet; *I have made the Earth, and created man upon it: I, even my Hands have stretched forth the Heavens.* Now when the making of Man is here spoken of as one of the greatest Works of God; this must needs be understood with relation to the Soul of Man. For certainly a thing so small and weak, so gross and heavy, and so dark and so decaying, as is the Humane Body, cannot justly be reckoned worthy of this great comparison. Were there nothing in the Constitution of Man but that, he could not be worthy to be compared with the vast bigness of the Earth and Heavens, with the constant Motion, the brightness and durableness of the Heavenly Bodies. But the Soul of Man is in a Sense vaster and larger than these, as it is capable to comprehend them: It is of more unwearied motion than they, it moves its self, it is brighter far, and far more durable than any of them. It is then upon the account of the Spirit in Man that the making of him is thus set together with those great operations of the Creating Power.

Upon these grounds we may conclude that the Prophet *Zachary* does in our Text intimate the great excellency and dignity of the Soul of Man.

It shall be the business of this Discourse to insist upon some Proof and Application of this Truth: And let us now perswade our selves for a little while to turn our Thoughts inward, to view and consider our selves, to know what a sort of Being God has given us: Of all knowledge this may be reckon'd some of the most useful and important: Hereby we shall come to understand what it becomes us to do, what our true Interest is, what great things we are capable of, and should therefore pursue them.

To demonstrate the Excellency of the Soul of Man, I shall insist only upon these two Heads of Discourse, as containing what is sufficient for the present purpose; They are, the *Nature* of the Soul, and the *Capacities* of it, which do arise from, and are the Consequents of such a Nature.

In the first place, Let us consider the *Nature* of the Soul of Man: And this I shall represent to you briefly under two Particulars. 1. It is a Spirit. 2. It is Immortal.

1. The Soul of Man is a Spirit; and therein it is an Excellent Being. It is Invisible; A thing that cannot be seen by the Eyes of the Body through the Excellency of it. It is said of God in Praise of him, that he cannot be seen. The Apostle *Paul* calls him by way of Eminency, the *Invisible God*. 1 *Tim.* 1. 17. This then is an Excellency, and does greatly recommend the Soul: It is too pure and sublime a thing to fall under the gross apprehension of Bodily Senses: It is a Pure, Uncompounded and Unmix'd thing: It is all the same, is not made up of worse and better Parts: It is in a sort all Light, and has no Darkness, is

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a bright celeſtial Ray, ſprung from the Great Father of Lights and Spirits; Or at leaſt it was very full of light and brightneſs in its Original State, and before it was ſullied with ſinful Pollution in the Fall of our firſt Parents. It has not diverſity of Parts deſigned for divers Actions, ſo as that what one Part can do, another cannot, which is the uſual diſparagement of Bodies; But all the Soul can do, whatever the Soul can do: It can, all of it, underſtand and will; apprehend or remember; it can all chuſe or refuſe. It has not ſome parts heavy and ſome active, ſome to move, and others to be moved, but is all full of Action, and is always working and buſie: It knows no wearineſs, it needs no reſt or refreſhment: It knows its own Actions, and chuſes what it does, and acts freely and from its own Motion. Theſe are the Properties and Advantages that belong to it as it is a Spirit.

That the Soul of Man is a Spirit, the Holy Scripture does abundantly declare. When a man dies, it ſays of his Body, *The Duſt ſhall return to the Earth as it was*; and of his Soul, *The Spirit ſhall return to God that gave it. Eccleſ.* 12. 7. This is a thing diſtinct from the Body; it was not raiſed from the Duſt as that was, but came from God immediately; nor does it return to the Duſt, but returns to God at our Death. The Apoſtle ſays; *What man knoweth the things of a man*, that is, the purpoſes, wiſhes, deſigns, *ſave the ſpirit of man which is in him*? ſpeaking of the Soul of Man, 1 *Cor.* 2. 11. And in the Fifth Chapter of that Epiſtle, at the 5th Verſe, he directs the *Corinthians* to ex-

communicate an Eminent Perſon among them who had been Inceſtuous, for the deſtruction of the Fleſh, that the Spirit might be ſaved in the Day of the Lord, meaning his Soul. I ſhall add no more to this particular, but proceed,

2. To what was next mentioned, as declaring the Excellent Nature of our Souls, which was, that they are Immortal. Theſe Beings have a beginning indeed as every thing elſe has, but One who is the firſt Cauſe and Author of all others, But the Souls of men ſhall never come to an End. When a man dies there is only a ſeparation made for a while of his Soul from his Body, with a diſſolution indeed of the Body, but the Soul remains the ſame that it was. That lives ſtill, though not here, and continues to be, though it has changed its Habitation. *Do not imagine* (ſaid the dying *Cyrus* to his Children) *That when I depart from you I ſhall be no where, nor any longer; For whilſt I was with you, ye could not ſee my Soul, only ye knew, by the Actions ye obſerved, that it was in my Body. Be aſſured then that it is ſtill the ſame, tho ye do never ſee it.* Thus the Learned Heathen could ſpeak of the Soul: And it is in the Nature of this to be Immortal as it is a Spirit. It has nothing in its ſelf to put an end to its being as it is an uncompounded thing: It cannot be deſtroyed by any *thing* elſe but only by God that made it. The Soul of man knows no decay, it admits of no encreaſe of its Subſtance; It remains always the ſame, and is herein a Noble Image of the Unchangeable God. It ſhall out-laſt the ſtrongeſt works of Humane Art: It ſhall endure longer than the Heavens and the Earth: It ſhall weary time, and then run on with

with Eternity. This is a very great and important Excellency of it, That it ſhall never ceaſe to be: and certainly if we are in any reſpect Immortal, this deſerves our very ſerious conſideration.

And this alſo the Holy Scripture (that ſource of all Saving-Knowledge and Wiſdom) does ſufficiently teach us: When it ſpeaks of our Being after this Life, and even before the Reſurrection of our Bodies; As when Chriſt ſaid to the penitent Thief when he was dying, *This day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe*: He was to Be, therefore his Soul was not to be diſſolved with his Body, and he was to be in *Paradiſe*, in a happy State. When the Scripture calls Death a Departure out of this World, it ſeems to intimate this. The Apoſtle *Paul* who was to leave his Body in this World, as all other dying Perſons do, yet ſpeaks of his Death as a Departure, 1 *Tim.* 1. 6. And in *Phil.* 1. 23. He ſpeaks of his Death as what he deſired, in theſe words, *I deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt*: Which does moſt plainly ſhew, he expected to Be ſtill, and to be more happy after Death than he was here. Again, this is alſo plainly ſuggeſted by our Saviour in the Parable of the Rich man and *Lazarus*, *Luke* 16. 19 *Verſe* to the End. The Soul of Man, then, is at his Death diſpoſed to ſuch Abodes as it deſerves and is ſuited to, till the time of the General Reſurrection of the Bodies of Men, and then it ſhall be united to its own Body again, and live with it for ever in a State of endleſs Happineſs, or endleſs Miſery. Thus much may ſuffice to ſhew the Excellency of the Soul of Man from its Nature.

The Second Head of Proof of this which I ſhall now ſpeak to is, the Capacities of the Soul ariſing from its Nature. It will give us a further apprehenſion of its Excellency to conſider what great and honourable things it is capable of. And theſe I ſhall ſpeak of under three Heads. It is capable of Knowledge; of Moral Qualifications; and of a moſt ſublime and elevated kind of Happineſs.

1. It is capable of Knowledge. It can know the Creatures about us which are the Objects of our Senſes, can underſtand their Nature and Uſe; by vertue of which it has, and exerciſes a Dominion over theſe things: It knows how to apply them to the ſerving our Neceſſity and Delight. By vertue of this it can make thoſe things which have no uſe of reaſon themſelves, to ſerve for rational and wiſe Purpoſes. It can tame the wild, and correct the hurtful Creatures: It can govern the Strong, and by artful application give ſtrength to the weak Ones: It often fetches wholeſome Food, or very effectual Phyſick out of mortal Poyſons.

The Soul of Man is capable of knowing himſelf: To underſtand his own Nature in the principles and end of it: To know his Ornaments and Diſparagements, the cauſes and means of his Happineſs or Miſery, and wherein theſe do truly conſiſt and lie.

Man is capable to underſtand and know very much of the Ever-bleſſed God, the Higheſt Being; to apprehend and meditate upon the moſt glorious and delightful Perfections of his Infinite Nature. He can ſee the Marks and Characters

ſters of theſe perfections upon the ſenſible things (which is the moſt excellent Knowledge, and the beſt uſe of them) as the Apoſtle ſuggeſts, *Rom.* 1. 20. *The Inviſible things of God are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

The Soul of Man renders him capable of knowing the Rules of true Wiſdom; of that Wiſdom which is from above. Thoſe Rules which direct us to render our ſelves acceptable and amiable to God and one another, to become and Honour our ſelves: Thoſe Rules by which the Wiſe and Holy Angels govern their behaviour; and thoſe by which the moſt Holy God, tho in an Infinite Eminency above all his Creatures, governs his.

And ſurely this Capacity of Knowledge may be lookt upon as a great and honourable Advantage; eſpecially that of ſuch a Knowledge as hath been mentioned. Knowledge finds the mind of man pleaſant and uſeful Employment, which as it is an active and buſie thing muſt have ſuch employment, or 'tis uneaſy and unhappy. Knowledge preſents us with the Objects of our Happineſs, and inables us to enjoy them. This is the light and brightneſs, and beauty of the Mind; Ignorance is dark and deform'd, and leaves the Soul unpoliſht and ugly; Ignorance like darkneſs, is uncomfortable and ſad; Knowledge, like the light, is chearing and delightful: This improves and raiſes the activity and freedom of the Mind, but ignorance is clogg'd and wretchedly confin'd. Of Knowledge then it may be ſaid, *It is more to be deſired than Gold, yea, than much*

much fine Gold: But especially is that true of that Knowledge which the *Psalmist* speaks it of, even that which presents to us the Rules of good living: Of which also *Solomon* speaks thus, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold; She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her*, Prov. 3. 13, 14, 15.

2. Another Capacity which greatly recommends the Soul of Man is, That it is capable of Moral Qualifications. By which word I mean the glorious Vertues of Holiness and Justice, Goodness and Mercy, Faithfulness and Prudence. It is not only capable of knowing the Rules of these Vertues, but also of possessing the Vertues themselves, and of expressing them in our Actions. Our behaviour towards God may be adorn'd with the bright Rays of Faith, and Love of Piety and Devotion, of Reverence and Humility. Our behaviour towards men may all be regulated and adorned with Justice and Charity; Meekness and Sincerity; Goodness and Mercy. None of the other Creatures about us can be possest of such Qualifications: A Stone or a Beast cannot be just, or good, or faithful. A Beast does not know what its self does; it has not freedom of will, does not chuse any of its actions, therefore cannot be vertuous or vicious. The Soul of Man has in this the Advantage of all the visible World, and when 'tis endowed with these Vertues, at least, it is brighter and more glorious than the Sun or Stars. These render us like

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to God himſelf in the higheſt manner that a Creature is capable of. In theſe things conſiſted the beſt part of the Divine Image in man before the unhappy Fall of our Nature in our firſt Parents; and tho we then loſt the things themſelves, yet we did not loſe the capacity of receiving them again: And when the Scripture ſpeaks of the renewing or reſtoring that Image in us again, this is ſaid to be done by enduing us with Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. Theſe are Excellencies which God aſcribes to himſelf, which he glories in, and therefore it muſt be our greateſt Advancement and Honour to be partakers of them; and it muſt be accounted an argument of great worth in the Soul of Man to be capable of ſuch Honourable Ornaments.

3. It is another Argument of this, that the Soul of Man is capable of enjoying a very high and honourable kind of Happineſs, even the beſt that any creatures can attain to. When the *Manna* which the Children of *Iſrael* were fed with in the Wilderneſs is called Angel's Food, it is intimated, that this wonderful Proviſion, did as a figure repreſent, that Mankind are capable of the ſame Happineſs with the glorious Angels, and all holy and devoted Souls do in ſome meaſure partake of it in this Life. By vertue of his Soul is every man, even from the Prince to the Beggar, capable of a Spiritual and Eternal Felicity.

As this is a Spirit, it has a very high ſenſe of things, and a very lively perception of Pleaſure or Pain. No meer Body or Matter however 'tis refin'd, or made up into an Animal, can have ſo great a ſenſe of Pleaſure or Happineſs as a Spirit may,

may, if it be proper to ſay that it has any at all. Matter, the beſt of it, is dull in compariſon to a Spirit, and muſt be moved; but a Spirit is active and moves its ſelf, and what is moſt capable of Action, is moſt capable of Happineſs; for all fruition conſiſts in Action. Further, The Objects of our Happineſs are all ſpiritual things. By vertue of this Spirit in us we can delight in and enjoy ſuch, which are the nobleſt and moſt excellent things in themſelves, and are able to afford the greateſt Pleaſure. Senſible Objects have not that force with them, nor that Power to pleaſe, which ſpiritual things have, that are the delights and bliſsful enjoyments of wiſe and refined Spirits. Hence it muſt be ſaid, that Mankind cannot fall into a greater or more unhappy miſtake than to think that there is no pleaſure but in gratifying the Senſes and Appetites of their Bodies with ſenſual Enjoyments; or that this is the greateſt pleaſure of any. This in truth is not worthy the Name of Pleaſure, if it be compared with the delight which a rectified mind can take in ſpiritual Objects and Enjoyments. Further, it is doubtleſs the greateſt thing in Happineſs, and that which adds much to it ſtill, how great ſoever it was before, That the Being which enjoys it, can reflect upon it, and ſo can conſider and know its ſelf happy. This the Soul of Man can do, and none but a rational and ſpiritual Nature can do this. But ſince I have ſpoken of ſpiritual Things, as the chief Object of our Happineſs, I ſhall particularly mention ſome of them.

The Soul of Man can pleaſe its ſelf highly in good and vertuous Actions; In thoſe which we do

do our ſelves, and in thoſe we ſee done by others. It is incomparably pleaſant to view and conſider the reaſonableneſs and the fitneſs of theſe, to ſee how neceſſary and juſt they are, to conſider how much Gratitude towards God, and the Obligations we have received from him, do require them of Mankind; to conſider the wiſdom and vaſt advantages of them. Hence did a good man acknowledge to God, *Thy Law is ſweet to my taſte, yea ſweeter than hony to my mouth.* There is not any thing among men ſo pleaſant and charming to a rectified Soul, as are the vertuous and pious Actions and Behaviour of good Men; while the ſenſual Minds of others dote on a fair outſide and fine cloaths, he ſees, and takes a more juſt and true delight in the glory that dwells within, and darts out its rays in Religious and good Actions. The Soul of Man can take delight in the converſe of holy, and wiſe and kind Angels; thoſe glorious Creatures that are the Beauty and Flower, as we may ſay, of the Creation. It can delight in what they are, in what they ſay, and in what they do, when it ſhall be admitted into their Society. And it is mentioned in Scripture as a part of that Felicity to which our conformity to the Laws of the Goſpel does intitle, and will bring us, That we ſhall enjoy hereafter the Society of *an innumerable company of Angels*, as well as that of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and of God the judge of all*, Heb. 12. 22. And very delightful it muſt needs be to good men in this Life, to conſider theſe noble Creatures, and to know that they are *Miniſtring ſpirits* upon all occaſions *ſent forth to miniſter for the good of the Elect*;

Elect; To consider, that whilst he is holy and vertuous, he is a delight to them, they love to be about him, and they have the charge of him to keep him in all his ways; and he is accordingly the object of their continual Care, and they are most willing to do for him all the Offices of kindness that he has occasion for. Further, the Soul can enjoy after a very pleasing and satisfying manner the ever-blessed God, who is an infinite, unmeasurable Good, a boundless Ocean of Excellencies and Perfections: It can delight in all the discover'd Glories of this Incomprehensible Being; and in considering him it is transported with pleasure, while it finds it self in the utmost stretch of its Faculties lost in the Infinite Incomprehensible Object. And this Happiness the Enjoyment of God may in some measure begin in this Life. A most ravishing Pleasure the Soul can take to consider what this Excellent Being has said of himself in Holy Scripture, and what discoveries he daily makes of himself in his Works. When it can view in some of these his wonderful Wisdom and Power, in others large and bounteous Goodness, in others awful and bright Justice and Righteousness. And when to these Meditations it can add the sweet thought, that this God is reconciled, that it is a Favourite of Heaven, then it must needs be as the *Psalmist* said, *My Meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.*

And then if to all this we add, that this great Object of the Soul's Happiness will endure for ever, and so will also the lesser ones that have been mentioned; that being spiritual in their Nature

Nature, they are all of them Eternal and Unchangeable, they will never ceaſe to Be, nor ceaſe to be delightful and pleaſing: If we conſider that the Soul its ſelf by its Immortal Nature is capable to be for ever bleſt with the Enjoyment of theſe Objects; we ſhall from hence ſee that we are capable of an Everlaſting Happineſs; of that which ſhall never be interrupted, never decay nor diminiſh, never come to an end: We are capable of living beyond all reach of Thought, beyond all meaſure of duration amidſt unfading Pleaſures, unſpeakable Joys, and a pure unmix'd and perfect Felicity. Oh that Men were ſo wiſe as to conſider theſe things! Thus much, and more than we can now conceive, our Souls are made capable to enjoy. And theſe things, all of them together at leaſt, I think do ſufficiently prove the great Worth and Excellency of the Soul of Man.

Application. And certainly, if the *things* which have been now ſaid were duly conſidered; if they had their juſt and due Influence upon Mankind, they would exceedingly alter and amend the lives and actions of a great many Men. They would make us act more ſuitable to the dignity and worth of our Souls, and with more regard to their Intereſts and Happineſs than we commonly do. And in particular theſe things following the Influence of them upon us would effect and cauſe. They would make us very Pious towards God, and thankful for what he has made us; they would make us prefer our Souls before our Bodies; and ambitious of attaining thoſe Divine and honourable Accompliſhments which we are in our Nature

Nature capable of, they would make us very Induſtrious to gain that Happineſs which we were Originally, and in our Nature deſigned for. In theſe things I ſhall ſet before you the due Uſe and Improvement of what has been ſaid on this Subject.

1. Let us with great Thankfulneſs acknowledge to the Creatour, what he has made us, and praiſe him for his Bounty towards us. Let us conſider and own it is *God that hath made us, and not we our ſelves.* It is one part of thankfulneſs to acknowledge the Benefits we have received. Let us own this, and endeavour to render to God all that which is due from us for it; To ſhew forth his praiſe, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our ſelves to his ſervice. Let each of us heartily ſay within himſelf, *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bleſs his Holy Name: Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* We may hereupon very juſtly thus expoſtulate with, and admoniſh our ſelves: Have I a power to think, and ſhall my Thoughts neglect the excellent Being that gave it me? Should he be ſeldom in my Thoughts by whom I conſtantly think? How baſe and ungrateful a Character of a man is this, *That God is not in all his thoughts*! Am I capable of Knowledge, and ſhall it not be my greateſt Ambition to know him that made me ſo, to know the moſt excellent of all Beings, that I might thereby be inabled to render him the Homage that belongs to him? Have I a Will to chuſe good, and ſhall I fix my choice on any thing before him? Shall I not cleave to him by it who is the chiefeſt Good, and who gave me this pow-

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er for that Purpoſe! Should I not always ſay it to him as the full Senſe of my Soul; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth that I can deſire beſides thee*! Shall I not pay him the Homage of my Affections from whom I have them, and the reaſon that I have wherewith to guide them! I ought to love him above all things, to fear him alone, to entertain my Hope with the pleaſing expectations of enjoying him: I ſhould be angry only with that which provokes his Anger, and hate what he hates and forbids. Thus ought we to admoniſh our ſelves upon this Foundation, and to reſolve accordingly. Thus ſhould we endeavour to honour him who hath crowned us with ſuch Dignity and Honour.

2. What has been ſaid concerning the Excellency of our Souls, ſhould make all men prefer them before their Bodies, and chiefly regard them. The Soul of Man is plainly the chief and moſt important part of him, as it is a Spirit and Immortal.

This ought then to have the chief Dominion in us. All the Appetites and Paſſions of the Inferior Body ought to be ſubject to the Faculties of the Mind. We ſhould not ſuffer our Senſes, or the deſires of the Fleſh to force Objects and Thoughts upon the Mind, but make it rather to chuſe its own employment upon conſideration and advice of our Judgment and Reaſon. How much Folly and Sin would ſuch a Courſe prevent? And it highly becomes and concerns us to give this as abſolute a Dominion in us as we can, that it may not be clogg'd or biaſſed by particu-

lar Temper or Conſtitution. The Obedience to Temper is a moſt effectual Hinderance both of Wiſdom and Religion. No man can govern himſelf well, that does not ſet his Reaſon above his Conſtitution, and make his Temper ſubject to the Rules of that and of Religion. I confeſs that in ſome caſes ſome ſeverity towards the Body may be neceſſary to this purpoſe; and a great deal of Self-denial and Mortification may be requiſite to the bringing our ſelves to this. But let us obſerve what our Saviour ſays to this Caſe. *If thy right hand* (ſays he) *offend thee, cut it off, and caſt it from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to be caſt into Hell Fire.* We were better wrong the Fleſh, if that muſt be, than to endanger the Spirit, and a little hurt the Body than damn the Soul. To bring our ſelves to this State of the Bodies abſolute and compleat ſubjection to the Mind, is of ſo great uſe and advantage, as that 'tis worth all that it can coſt us: For ſo we ſhall become free and eaſy in all our Actions: We ſhall poſſeſs and enjoy our own Souls; we ſhall will to do what we ſhould, and ſhall do it the more readily, and do it the better and the more perfectly: Thus ſhall a man have the greateſt Comfort in his Actions, He ſhall exerciſe the brighter vertues, and obtain by them the more praiſe and favour with God and Man.

Let us prefer our Souls above our Bodies, and chiefly mind the Intereſts of them. We ſhould make the Intereſts of the Body ſtand by, when they come into competition with thoſe of the Soul. We ſhould govern our ſelves in all things

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as far as this can be done with a chief regard of theſe. It were but juſt and fitting, and due to our ſelves, that we govern our ſelves ſo, in what we chuſe to love or hate; in what we purſue or avoid; and that it be the grand buſineſs of our Lives to promote the advantage of our Immortal Souls.

3. Let us be greatly ambitious of thoſe Divine and high Qualifications that we have been made capable to poſſeſs: ſince we may be wiſe and holy, juſt and good, faithful and prudent; let us earneſtly endeavour to be ſo. To be endowed with theſe Vertues, is to put on the greateſt excellency and worth. The Scripture very juſtly ſays, *The righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.* Theſe Vertues in truth are the greateſt, and the moſt becoming Ornaments: Theſe make the brighteſt and moſt laſting Beauty; ſuch as Angels love, and God himſelf takes delight in. Theſe will encreaſe, and not fade or decay with Time, and will laſt to Eternity. Theſe are the trueſt, and the moſt uſeful Riches: they do in a ſenſe deliver the Soul from Hell, and entitle it to everlaſting Bleſſedneſs. Theſe are not uncertain Riches, but are ſuch a ſure and durable Poſſeſſion, as Moth and Ruſt cannot corrupt, nor can Thieves break through to, and ſteal them: Theſe in the Exerciſes of them in good Works, do lay up a treaſure in Heaven. Let it be conſider'd, that as we are capable of theſe Vertues, we are alſo capable of being the Subjects of the contrary Vices: And that if we are not vertuous and holy, we muſt needs be vicious and impions: He that is not juſt and true in his

dealings, muſt be unjuſt and perfidious: He that is not merciful and good muſt be hard-hearted and cruel: And as we are acceptable and lovely to God by thoſe Vertues in us, ſo we are odious and deteſtable with theſe Vices. *The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loveth him that followeth after Righteouſneſs.* The pure Angels abhor Sinners, and do not care to be near them, to ſee what is ſo odious and offenſive as the ſins of men are to them. As Holineſs and Vertue do exalt, and honour, and become us, ſo does wickedneſs and impiety debaſe and diſparage us; Theſe latter deform us into the likeneſs of the Devil, and ſo make us truely more vile than the Beaſts that periſh. So much reaſon is there that we earneſtly endeavour, then, to adorn our Souls with Piety and Vertue.

4. And *Laſtly*, The Excellency and Immortality of our Souls ſhould make us greatly concerned to ſecure and attain for them an Everlaſting Happineſs. Since we are capable of ſuch an one, we ſhould not reſt till we have ſome good aſſurance of it. It would become us, and it were our Wiſdom to *give all diligence to make our calling and election ſure*, as the Apoſtle adviſes: We ſhould work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling.

Let every man, then, take it into his moſt deliberate Thoughts, What ſhall become of him to all Eternity. Let this be a great concern with us all: When this frail Tabernacle of my Body ſhall be taken down (in which my Soul now dwells) Where then ſhall my poor baniſht Soul abide? Where, Oh where ſhall that be then diſ-

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poſed of? To what company ſhall I go, for I cannot be happy alone? And what good things ſhall I then enjoy, for I have not a ſelf-ſufficiency within me? I am told, and aſſured of two very different States, after this Life; the one of perfect Happineſs, and the other of perfect Miſery: To which of theſe two States am I likely to be doom'd? ſince I am immortal, and muſt abide forever, in that I am ſent to, it greatly concerns me to know which of them it ſhall be. The one is deſigned for good Men, and the other for the Bad: Which is it then of theſe two Characters that I bear? Since the courſe of my Life has a certain tendency towards the one or the other of theſe, and I ſhall fare hereafter according as I have lived here; let me conſider well what a Courſe I take. Am I fit to dwell in the kind and loving World above, if I harbour any Malice, or Envy, or Hatred in my Heart? Am I fit for the pure Manſions of Heaven, if I live in ſenſual and brutiſh Sins? Am I fit to live with thoſe who are all faithful and true, with the God of Truth and Righteouſneſs, if I am deceitful and unjuſt, and had rather be cunning than ſincere? Am I fit to be in the preſence of God, and in the Company of thoſe that Reverence and Adore him, if I am habitually Prophane, and accuſtomed to deſpiſe all things that are Sacred, and to abuſe the awful Name of God, in vain Oaths and Perjuries? Am I fit to leave this World, and to be happy out of it, if my Heart be ſo ſet upon it, that I can love, I can reliſh and delight in nothing, but what is of this World?

If this be my Condition, and this has been my Courſe of Life, certainly, this will not bring me to Heaven. If a man finds then, that it has been thus with him, he ſhould reſolve to ſtop and divert his Courſe. Since *without Holineſs no man ſhall ſee God*; we muſt follow after Holineſs; we muſt follow after theſe Divine Qualifications, that have been mentioned as things neceſſary to our everlaſting Happineſs. We muſt ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well, and devote our ſelves to the Service of God in a courſe of univerſal Obedience to his Commands; we muſt repent of our paſt Sins, that they may be blotted out; we muſt purify our ſelves as God is pure: *Bleſſed* (ſays our Saviour) *are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*: We muſt cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God; and preſent our ſelves, and our repentance, and obedience, all in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, hoping for acceptance through him, and for the favour of God to be beſtowed upon us, only for his ſake.

Let it be conſider'd, that we muſt either dwell with God, and his holy Angels in everlaſting Joy and Bliſs, or be doom'd to the Priſons of the Devils, and confin'd to dwell with enraged, and wicked, and ſpiteful Companions. If we muſt not dwell in the Regions of Light, we ſhall be diſmiſſed to the gloomy Caves of everlaſting Darkneſs. If we are not admitted to the Joys, and Hymns, and Praiſes of Heaven; we ſhall be condemned to the Howlings and Diſcords, and Torments of Hell, and there bear a ſad part our ſelves in thoſe Everlaſting Sorrows.

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There is no Middle State; but the one or the other of these will be our everlasting and unalterable Portion. Life and Death are set before us, and we have leave to chuse between them; But it is so, That if we will not chuse Life, we shall not be at Liberty to refuse Death. If we do not chuse Life and Happiness, and earnestly, and steadily engage in the Course that leads to it, we must fall into the other; destruction and misery will come of themselves. *How shall we escape*, says the Apostle, *If we neglect so great Salvation*?

Let it be consider'd, that we must determine our choice between these two things, while our present Life lasts; not a moment more will be allowed us to do it in; and this Life is of uncertain duration, and most certainly is hastning away. It is best for us therefore to hasten our choice in this Matter, and to be very constant and steady in the way to Happiness, when we have chosen that.

THE PRAYER.

O Eternal and Almighty God! Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadſt formed the Earth, or the World, even from everlaſting to everlaſting, thou art God. Thy duration is without beginning or end, and thou art the Author and End of all things beſides thy ſelf. It is thou, O Lord, that haſt made us, and not we our ſelves: Thou haſt ſent us into this world to enjoy it a while; to ſtudy, and ſee Thee in the things about us; to praiſe Thee for their Excellency and Goodneſs; to love Thee for them, and more than them, as being the Fountain and Center of all that Goodneſs, which is ſcattered and diſperſed among them: And thou haſt made us for the high and noble Happineſs of enjoying thy ſelf. O Lord, how great and good things haſt thou deſigned us for, and how low and mean things do we confine our ſelves to! We are aſhamed to think how ſeldom we think of thee; we uſe thy Creatures, and thy Gifts, and forget thy Self; we are charmed and detained with that little Goodneſs that is in them, and neglect that infinite Abundance which is in thee; we commonly make but a low animal uſe of the things of this world, conſidering in them only their ſuitableneſs to the Appetites and Neceſſities of our Bodies, and valuing and delighting in them only for that; and ſo they do not raiſe up our minds to thee: And thus it comes to paſs, that we ſeek none but theſe things; we live as if we were not made capable of better; we ſeek our Happineſs where it is not, and neglect it where it is; we hew out to our ſelves broken ciſterns, that can hold no water, and forſake Thee the Fountain of living waters: In thee alone is true content, and full ſatisfaction to be found. O Lord, as ſenſible of this our very guilty, and very dangerous Errour; we deſire for the future to return unto thee;

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to esteem thee our chiefest Good, and to desire thee above all things: Our Hearts are now ready to say each of us for our selves. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy Name: We desire, O Lord, to praise and to honour thee with all the excellent Faculties and Powers that thou hast given us: We devote our Reason and Understanding to thee, to learn and meditate on thy glorious Excellencies, thy wonderful works, and the instances of thy obliging Goodness: We devote all the power of our Wills to thee; to chuse thee, to fix upon thee, as our chief Good; to submit to thy will, as the rule and law of ours. We devote our Affections, to love thee above all things, to fear and reverence thee, to hope and trust in thee, to hate what thou hatest, and love what thou dost love. We devote all our Members unto thee, to be governed by thy wise and righteous Laws. We desire, O Lord, we purpose to love and serve thee the Eternal, Infinite, and most Bounteous Good, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength: O Lord, strengthen we pray thee, and confirm our too feeble and wavering Resolutions. Create thou us again in Christ Jesus unto good works. Let us not live estranged from thee, whom we are made capable to enjoy, both here and hereafter. Make us in love with Holiness and Vertue, as the health and rectitude of our Minds, as our brightest and most advantageous Ornaments, and the most useful, and most durable Riches. Renew in us, most loving Father thy decayed Image, and create us to righteousness and true holiness. Learn us to see thy glorious Perfections in the visible things about us, to make a religious Use of all that we enjoy in this World, in loving thee for what is Good, praising thee for what is Excellent in them, and giving thee Thanks for whatever we enjoy of them.

We humbly recommend to thy infinite Mercies all Estates and Conditions of Men: O Lord, lover of Souls, pity those that sit in darkness, and bless them with the Knowledge of thee, and of thy Christ, whom to know is Life everlasting; rescue them from their miserable Bondage under the Enemy of Mankind, and bring them in-

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to the Kingdom of thy Son. We pray thee, bleſs and defend the Chriſtian Church; let the Gifts and Graces of thy good Spirit be abundantly poured out upon it; purge it from all things diſpleaſing to thee, and give it peace, and great enlargement. Be merciful to that Part of it which thou haſt planted amongſt us in theſe Nations: Water it plenteouſly with the Dew of thy Heavenly Bleſſing; make it fruitful in all good Works, and a Praiſe in the Earth: We pray thee bleſs our King and Queen, and all ſubordinate Magiſtrates, and thoſe that are the Miniſters of thy holy Word and Sacraments; make them all in their ſeveral Places and Stations, uſeful to the promoting Piety and Vertue amongſt us. And make all thoſe that are under them, peaceable and obedient, teachable and ſubmiſſive to their Laws and godly Counſels. Grant that we may all lead peaceable and quiet lives, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty. Viſit and relieve all thoſe that are in any Trouble or Affliction. Bleſs our Relations, requite our Friends and Benefactors; and forgive our Enemies, Perſecutors, and Slanderers, and turn their Hearts.

Finally, O Father of Mercies, we give thee Thanks for all thy Care of our Immortal Souls, for all that thou haſt done for their Happineſs and Well-fare: We pray thee, bleſs to our ſpiritual Advantage thoſe Ordinances of thine, which we have this Day been partakers of. Give us leave to commit our ſelves to thy Protection for this Night, and reward our truſt in thee, with ſafe and comfortable Reſt; that being well refreſh'd, we may return the next Morning chearfully to our ſeveral Buſineſſes and Duties; and do thou accept us in all, we pray, through Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe Name we preſent our ſelves, and all our poor Services unto thee; and in whoſe moſt comprehenſive Words we conclude theſe our imperfect Prayers, ſaying; *Our Father*, &c.

Of

OF

Vain Thoughts,

OR;

INCONSIDERATION,

With the

Miſchiefs and Remedies.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Pſalm 119. 113.

I hate Vain Thoughts, but thy Law do I love.

OUR Care and Endeavour to live well muſt begin within us, or it will prove vain and ineffectual. We muſt *keep the Heart with all diligence,*

diligence, for out of it are the Iſſues of Life, *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 4. 23. According to which, our Saviour teaches us, That *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*, and out of the good or evil treaſure there proceed good or evil actions. We muſt then take notice what our Thoughts are, if we would have our Life good, and not neglect them, as Men too commonly do; and this is what the *Pſalmiſt* plainly intimates in theſe Words; *I hate vain thoughts, but thy Law do I love.*

I ſhall not trouble you with long Criticizing upon the words, leſt I ſhould be guilty my ſelf of what I intend to diſcourſe againſt. It ſhall ſuffice to obſerve for the juſtifying of our tranſlation, that the Original word here tranſlated Thoughts, is uſed with that ſignificancy in other places of Scripture; Particularly 1 *Kings* 18. 21: Where it ſeems to ſignify unſetled, and irreſolute Thoughts; ſuch as could not determine them to a fixed and ſteady Obedience to the Truth; and in *Job* 4. 13. where it ſignifies ſuch Thoughts as the roving Imaginations of the Night are wont to be employed in: In both theſe places it ſignifies ſuch as are not well guided, nor directed. And by reaſon of this uſe of the word in thoſe places, I doubt not but it is very fitly done, that our Tranſlators have added the word *Vain* in the Text, to determine, and ſignify what ſort of Thoughts the *Pſalmiſt* meant by the uſe of the word here. I ſhall therefore underſtand this Text, according to the import of the word *Vain* in our Language; and ſhall repreſent it as ſignifying thus much; I hate all idle, roving, and uſeleſs Thoughts, ſuch

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as are not conſiderate, and deſigned, and directed to ſome good and worthy purpoſe; all inconſiderate Thinking. As there are a great many idle, impertinent words ſpoken among Mankind; many very uſeleſs and unprofitable converſations; and as there are, eſpecially in the briskneſs and activity of Childhood and Youth, a great many very idle, and trifling actions done by us; ſo there are in moſt of us, much rather a vaſt multitude of idle and uſeleſs Thoughts; there is a great deal of inconſiderate Thinking among men. Every man that will but carefully obſerve himſelf, may find that his Mind is always buſie, that it frames a multitude of Thoughts, and entertains its ſelf with them; but that a great many of theſe are apt to be undirected and unchoſen ones. The vain and inconſiderate Mind acts within it ſelf, and thinks without government of its ſelf; and frames Thoughts juſt as a Tree ſhoots forth many ſuperfluous, and unbearing Branches: And the Word here tranſlated Thoughts, does ſometimes in the Sacred *Language* ſignify ſuch Branches of a Tree. One therefore very fitly calls Vain Thoughts, *Surculi mentis infructuoſi* (*Stearn de Obſtin.* Pag. 224.) The fruitleſs Suckers of the Mind.

Such employment of the Mind as this, and the Temper which is apt to produce it, the *Pſalmiſt* ſaid, *he hated*; *but the Law of God he loved.* To ſtudy and meditate on that, to learn it, that might conform his Life and Actions to it; to conform his Mind and Life to that Rule he deſired; but theſe roving, unguided Thoughts, he hated: And by this ſetting thus theſe two together,

ther, he plainly intimates their oppoſition to each other; that he hated Vain Thoughts, as contrary to the due obſervance of the Law of God, and a hindrance of that.

To make the Diſcourſe on this Subject, as ſerviceable as I can, I ſhall,

1. Endeavour to make it more plain and evident, what ſort of Thoughts, or what a Diſpoſition of Mind the *Pſalmiſt* here ſpeaks of, and I ſhall diſcourſe againſt.

2. To ſhew the Miſchief of theſe.

3. To propoſe the proper Remedies of them.

In the firſt place, that I may render it plain and evident, what I do at preſent diſcourſe againſt; and ſo may convince every man, that there is ſuch a Diſtemper of Mind, as I ſpeak of, which all of us are liable to, and which we may call, The Vanity of the Mind, or inconſideration: I ſhall give you ſome Inſtances of Vain Thoughts, which are common among men, and in which this Temper of Mind is wont to exerciſe its ſelf.

And *Firſt*; Such are thoſe Thoughts, which have no deſigned end nor purpoſe. A multitude of theſe is apt to entertain our Minds. There are very few men, if any, but if they look back upon themſelves, after they have been a good while thinking, they would often find that their Minds had been engaged in ſuch employment, as they can give no reaſonable or good account of. If the Mind be not ſet to buſineſs it employs its ſelf, but without deſign, and without fruit; it is buſie ſtill, and always ſo; but often very idly buſie, and employed, as we may juſtly ſpeak: It

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is true, there may be ſome relaxations of the Mind, and theſe are neceſſary to the Health of the Body, and to relieve the Animal Spirits, that would be too much ſpent and diſturbed with continual commanded thinking; this is neceſſary to the better peformance of our Tasks of Duty when we ſet about them: At ſome times the Thoughts muſt be unbent (as we may ſpeak) that is, not directed nor confined to any particular Employment or Duty. But that which is condemned is this; when a Man's Mind is habitually ſo; when it is never, nor can well be fixed to any good purpoſe; when a Man ordinarily ſpends a great deal of time thus relaxed, and ſo neglects his Duty, or through the wandering levity of his Mind performs it ill: Eſpecially does it condemn an idle, unprofitable courſe of Life; when a man never ſets himſelf to any honourable, or uſeful Buſineſs or Employment. As how great is the multitude of thoſe, who thus live at eaſe (as a very pious Man laments in a ſad Catalogue of the Sins of our times) who rather paſs away their time, than they do live; who are every way unprofitable; who have no tasks of Duty to God, or of goodneſs and ſerviceableneſs to Mankind ever in their thoughts, or in their hands. Yea, in our degenerate Age it has been counted gentile and noble, according to the Mode of the Times, to have nothing to do, to be idle and uſeleſs; (tho thanks be to God we have better Examples over us now, from whence we hope a wiſer and nobler Faſhion will take place) And indeed the ſoft Education of many under the management of an indulgent

Mother,

Mother, who is her ſelf perhaps as uſeleſs as one that *is dead*, *while ſhe liveth*; 1 *Tim.* 5. 6. does betray them to a contemptible worthleſneſs; while the little *Maſter* muſt learn no more than it pleaſes, 'tis a chance whether he learns any thing or not: If the Child happen to have a good natural Judgment, and to diſcern the neceſſity, and uſefulneſs, and credit of good Accompliſhments betimes, then he has ſome; but otherwiſe he ſhall forſake his Tutor, that teaches, for his Livery Boy that flatters him, and then the Gentleman is no better accompliſht than the Beggar: And with ſuch Perſons the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of their whole life are in a ſort undirected and ungnided; they live by no rule, and they think and act by chance; and as the Objects that preſent themſelves, or as the motions of Luſts, and ſenſual Appetites lead them; juſt as other Animals live.

Again, we may often catch our ſelves at the vain Suppoſitions of what is perhaps never likely to come to paſs; thinking needleſly, what if ſuch or ſuch a thing ſhould be, when there does not appear even the leaſt probability of it: We are often ſuppoſing our ſelves in the Circumſtances which there is no likelihood, or perhaps no poſſibility of our coming into; and then tormenting or pleaſing our ſelves with the thoughts of them, according to what they are. One fancies himſelf a King, and pleaſes his Thoughts with the great and ſplendid circumſtances of ſuch a Condition; and if he be an angry, revengeful Man, he is killing his Enemies; if he be good natured and beneficent, he is advancing and preferring

ferring his Friends. Another it may be, in his Melancholly Mood, is fancying himſelf a Beggar, and is gratifying himſelf with the eaſe and careleſneſs of ſuch a Condition, or afflicting himſelf with the Thoughts of the contempt and wretchedneſs which belong to it. Often do we loſe a great deal of Time, and many Thoughts, in muſing upon the Condition we deſire, and deſign, and may probably come into, before it comes.

Again, of this ſort too are thoſe Thoughts for the moſt part, which correct, and cenſure the Carriage of other Men in the Stations different from our own: As when private Men will be directing a King how to Govern, and they that ſit at home will be teaching a General abroad, how to order his Marches and Battels. When we ſtudy the Duties of other Men rather than our own, and cenſure what we cannot underſtand, we are then very vainly and fruitleſly employed. All conſideration and ſtudy of the Duty of others in their places, is vain and impertinent; but when it is intended, and directed to the inſtructing of our ſelves, for our own good Behaviour in thoſe Circumſtances, when they are ſuch as we are in, or are likely to come into: Or when our Neighbour, whom we cenſure, is ſuch an one, as we may be ſuppoſed able to adviſe, and direct him; and whom it is not a thing above us to pretend to direct him; as it is certainly above the Subject to direct, and dictate to his Governours in Church or State.

Further, the Thoughts that are unſeaſonable, and do interrupt us in our preſent Duty, what-

ever it is, are in that reſpect vain Thoughts; and theſe proceed from the Vanity of the Mind, theſe are commonly at that time unconſidered and unchoſen; and ſuch as the roving of the Mind accidentally falls upon. But if they are choſen and deſigned at ſuch an unſeaſonable time, yet are they vain and fruitleſs, becauſe they divert a Man from that which is his preſent Duty; they either hinder him from doing it at all, or from doing it well. Such are the Thoughts of wordly Affairs and Buſineſſes, which may be lawful enough, and fitting at another time, when we are or ſhould be engaged in the worſhip of God, and in Exerciſes of Devotion; and doubtleſs ſuch may alſo be thoſe that are upon Divine and Religious Matters, when Men are in the Affairs of an honeſt Calling; as when they intrude and mingle themſelves ſo with a mans Buſineſs, as to diſturb his mind, to beat him off from, or hinder the due performance of it. We are not bound to be actually thinking of God and Heaven, or the Day of Judgment, at all times, or to have our Diſcourſe when we are in Company, always taken up with Speculations in Religion, which ſome unjuſtly appropriate the name of good Diſcourſe to. It is good diſcourſe to direct, and adviſe, and aſſiſt one another in our Duty of any kind; and then it is good Diſcourſe which does direct or encourage a Neighbour in his worldly Buſineſs, and Calling, in its proper Seaſon. They have a wrong Notion of Religion (and it is juſt ſuch an one as that of the Papiſts, when they call a Monkiſh Life by way of Eminence, a Religious one) who think

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no Thoughts or Diſcourſe good or religious, but when the Myſteries of our Religion, or our future hopes, and paſſages of Scripture are the Subject of them. A man may be religious in the Actions, and ſo in the Thoughts about the meaneſt Trade; becauſe he may do all that he does to the Glory of God; and he does in his worldly Buſineſs, that which God has commanded, and ſet him to do; accordingly the Thoughts about thoſe things, ſo far as they are neceſſary, and in their ſeaſon are dutiful, obedient and religious Ones: they are ſuch as Religion does allow, and indeed oblige a man to have. He that ſhould neglect his Trade, tho it was the meaneſt Handicraft, to meditate on Divine things; or that ſhould do his work ill, by reaſon of having his mind unſeaſonably employed, and taken up with theſe things would tranſgreſs as truly as he that ſhould neglect the due acknowledgment of God, to apply himſelf to his worldly Buſineſs, or ſhould perform the worſhip of God ſlightly, by reaſon of having his mind wandering from that to his worldly Buſineſs.

In a word, thoſe Thoughts which are looſe, and undirected, which do no way concern our Duty, or which do impertinently divert us from preſent Duty; they come under the name of Vain Thoughts: And theſe were they which *David* hated; together with, by conſequence, that vain, roving, inconſiderate Diſpoſition of Mind, which produces them. Thus much may ſuffice to ſhew diſtinctly what it is the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks of.

The next part of our Buſineſs is, to juſtifie this good Man's Hatred of this unhappy Diſpoſition of Mind, and theſe Exerciſes of it: The reaſon of which his hatred of them, he intimates to be their contrariety to the due obſervance of the Law of God. And that this is the miſchievous Nature of them will fully appear in ſhort, by theſe two things. 1. They are a mighty hinderance of doing good. 2. They greatly expoſe, and commonly betray a Man into the doing of Evil.

1. This Diſpoſition of Mind muſt needs be a great hinderance of all good and worthy Actions. Some are ſo fooliſh, as even to affect this Diſpoſition, to endeavour, cheriſh, and indulge a roving, unfixed Thought: they allow, and follow all the wild Freaks of the Imagination; and this is the admir'd Wit of our Times. But the Imagination is the wildeſt, and moſt ungovernable, and dangerous Faculty in the Mind of Man, and it cannot chuſe but be very unhappy for any man to indulge it, and give himſelf up to follow it. Such as do ſo, are commonly Lawleſs in their Opinions and Manners; they are not capable of any fixed Principles, or of a ſteady Courſe of Actions, and by conſequence, they cannot ſet themſelves to any uſeful, or creditable way of living. Hence we often ſee the great Wits of the Times good for nothing; they can ſquander away their Time, their Health, or an Eſtate; but cannot get any good, or do any; and doubtleſs, to be thus a Wit, is to be a Fool.

The inconſiderate, and wandering Diſpoſition of Mind, is a great hinderance of all the Improvement of the Mind, and of furniſhing it for

for honourable and good Actions. A man under the power of this, can never ſtudy his Duty carefully, cannot learn or underſtand the Laws and Rules of the ſeveral Vertues; therefore he knows not how, or what it is to do well. He can never ſeriouſly ponder, and deliberately conſider the motives, and inducements to do well; and therefore theſe have no force upon him, and then he muſt needs live a wild, and ungovern'd Life, he cannot be vertuous and good, unleſs he could be ſo by chance; and indeed an Houſe may be regularly built by chance; or an excellent Diſcourſe be compoſed accidentally, by the throwing of the Letters careleſly together, as well as Man can live a wiſe, and well-compoſed, and good Life without conſideration: And herein lies, I doubt not, one ground of the common differences between man and man; eſpecially between thoſe who have equal advantages for Improvement. One man ſteadily fixes, and applies his mind to ſome good Purpoſe, to ſerve God and Man in ſome particular way of living, and he is of ſome uſe in the World. Another applies his mind to no one thing, and he is good for nothing. So when ſeveral men enjoy the ſame means of Grace and Goodneſs; one becomes good and religious, and another receives no Benefit at all by them; The reaſon is, becauſe the one uſes them with deſign to improve by them, and with careful application of his mind to the obtaining this end; the other has no care or endeavours about this matter: His roving and vain Imaginations leave no room for better Thoughts; they do not give him leave to attend to

and conſider the Precepts and Rules of Religion and Vertue, till his mind is formed by them. Theſe things have their Influence upon us, by our ſerious, and deliberate Meditation upon them. 'Tis true, the Spirit of God is the efficient Cauſe of all that is good in us; but in grown Perſons, he does this in, and by the exerciſe of their own Thoughts, upon the Rules and the Motives of Vertue, and Religion; and we muſt be our ſelves the Inſtruments, as well as the Subjects of his Operations in us. It is therefore, that God has appointed the preaching of his Word to be the ordinary means of making men religious and vertuous; that thereby thoſe things which may direct, and perſwade them to be ſo, may be propoſed, and ſet before them, with ſtrong Reaſon, and earneſt Exhortation. Thus then is the Vanity, or Inconſiderateneſs of the Mind, a miſchievous Quality, and worthy the Hatred of him who deſires to be good; as it hinders men from being good, and by conſequence from doing well,

2. It is very miſchievous too, as it does exceedingly expoſe men to do Evil, and often betrays them into Sin: And this Effect it has, by theſe two ways.

1. As this Vanity of Mind abandons a man to his Inclinations.

2. As it expoſes us to the Influence of Temptations.

1. This inconſiderate Vanity of the Mind abandons a man to his Inclinations: it makes him follow theſe inſtead of leading them, and to obey what he ſhould govern; whatever the Inclinations

nations of a man are, the Vanity of the Mind carries him after them, and they are moſtly to Evil. The ungoverned thoughts are uſually employed by the reigning Sin, and the Man ſhall be muſing on that, and be guilty of it in his Heart, when he has not opportunity of committing in overt Acts. The covetous Man's idle Thoughts are all upon Gain, and good Bargains, or great Loſſes. The proud Man's ungovern'd Thoughts are extolling himſelf, magnifying every good Quality in him, if he has any, into a Mountains Bulk, and diminiſhing his moſt enormous Faults; they are deſpiſing others, and preferring him above them. Thus do theſe Thoughts uſually actuate and exerciſe in the Mind the prevailing Vice; and ſo our Thoughts become ſinful; when they are inconſiderate, they will not be only ſo, but will be angry, proud, prophane, unclean, or any thing elſe, according to the inward Character or Tincture of the Mind; and then ſuch Thoughts as theſe do cheriſh and ſtrengthen theſe Inclinations, which ought to be mortified, and ſubdued; they make them the leſs governable, and ready, and apt to break out into ſuitable Actions, when temptation and opportunity are offer'd.

2. This State of Mind mightily expoſes a man to the Influence of Temptations; for it renders him always ready to receive them. *He that hath no Rule over his Spirit*, ſays *Solomon*, *Is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls*, Prov. 25. 28. The Enemy of our Souls will eaſily ſend in his black Troops of wicked Suggeſtions, if we are not continually well guarded againſt him. And what ſhall hinder an

inconſiderate Man from receiving any manner of Temptations? The Adverſary has not ſo little craft as to awaken him to conſider what he does by tempting to the moſt enormous kinds, or degrees of wickedneſs at firſt: No, he draws the careleſs Sinner on to theſe by the Steps of leſſer Sins. He watches to do miſchief, and goes *about like a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour*; and the vain, ungovern'd Mind is a ready Prey to him. If we will not govern our ſelves well, we leave our ſelves to him, and he will govern us ill; and unleſs God's reſtraining Grace prevent, he will lead us captive at his will. This Enemy of our Souls, will ſow his Tares there while we ſleep, and are careleſs. He perfectly knows our Inclinations too, and what to ſuggeſt, that ſhall moſt effectually prevail with us, and ſo does the more certainly draw us into Sin and Wickedneſs.

Thus we are in continual Danger from inteſtine, and external Foes, and therefore we cannot be careleſs of our ſelves, but they will prevail over us, and draw us into Sin. And theſe Thoughts which men are apt to think very innocent ones, and to neglect as not worth their minding, we may ſee do expoſe and betray us into ſuch Thoughts, and by conſequence diſpoſe us for ſuch Actions as are ſinful: And that Temper of Mind, which ſome affect, and are proud of, as being called Wit, does prove but Madneſs and Folly; it is not only unprofitable, but alſo very hurtful. And thus much may ſuffice to the Second Part of this Diſcourſe, which was to ſhew the miſchief of allowing, and entertaining

I ſhall now in the laſt place propoſe the proper Remedies of this Vanity and Inconſiderateneſs of Mind: And let none think that to do ſo, is an impertinent, or vain Task; for as the miſchief, and danger of it is great, ſo the diſeaſe is common. As the Imagination is a faculty natural to the Mind of Man, ſo all men are more or leſs ſubject to the giddineſs of it, and liable to be diverted from any good deſign, or to be diſturbed, and hindered in the proſecution of it thereby. This Vanity of the Mind is a diſtemper common to the corrupted Nature. Now to remedy this then, we muſt obſerve theſe things following, as abſolutely neceſſary.

1. A Man muſt needs ſet himſelf ſome task, and employment. With an idle Life it is cheriſht, and will reign, and throw a man into a thouſand Enormities. Something to do, and a diligent application of the Mind to it, tames the unruly Thought, uſes it to government, and makes it obedient and uſeful. Buſineſs mightily helps conſideration; by exerciſe of thinking ſteadily to ſome one Purpoſe deſigned, and choſen, a Man becomes habituated to the doing ſo, and is the more capable of fixing his Mind to any thing beſides that. This evidently appears in the great, and extenſive Knowledge in all Matters, which we find in ſome Perſons, that were bred to a Trade, and in the capacity which we ſee in many ſuch to apply their thoughts to any thing, and to learn, and make a good Judgment of all Matters. Thoſe that have been ſo unhappy as to be taught nothing in their younger Years, who rather diverted themſelves with the

Teachers

Teachers of ſome Trifles, than learnt any thing, have the more to learn now, and the more to do, when they can be convinced of the danger, the guilt, the contemptibleneſs of an idle Life. And how many wiſe, and great Ladies have employed their Time, and their Hands in working for the Poor, to their own immortal Honour, with God and Man? Together with theſe employments, ſuch may very well mingle a ſet Task of publick, and private Devotion; and ſo keep the Mind well exerciſed, as much as it needs to be. But this leads me to another Remedy of this Diſtemper.

2. We muſt endeavour to furniſh our Minds with good ſtore of Sacred Knowledge. Ignorance and Vanity, as well as Idleneſs, and that do and muſt needs dwell together. If we apply our ſelves to this accompliſhment in the proper Seaſons for it, that is, on the *Lords-Days*, and in the Intervals of Buſineſs, and neceſſary Refreſhment on other Days; we ſhall have of this endeavour after ſuch Knowledge, a good Employment; and we ſhall be ſo long kept from Idle and Vain Thoughts. And then when a man does know much, eſpecially of Sacred things, his Mind will not want good and uſeful Objects to entertain its ſelf with at any time, when he is at leiſure for thinking: He needs not at any time be idle, but may be meditating on the Rules of Vertue, and good living; he may be applying them to his Actions, and examining, and regulating his Courſe of Life, encouraging himſelf in the good he finds, and rebuking himſelf for his Errours: He may be very profitably meditating

on

on the perfections of the Divine Nature, and thereby raiſing in himſelf all thoſe pious, and devout Diſpoſitions of Mind, which are a ſuitable acknowledgment of thoſe Perfections. He may be often thinking of the World to come, to which all Mankind are haſtning; and ſending his Thoughts before him into Eternity, and muſing upon thoſe two different States, which will hereafter divide all Mankind between them; and in one or other of which, we muſt have our longeſt abode, even to all Eternity: Theſe are Thoughts very fit to make the Mind wiſe and ſerious, and to cure the levity of it, and are certainly very good and profitable employment for it, when no duty requires its attendance. But he that is not acquainted with ſubjects worthy of his Thoughts, will ſtill think too, and then he muſt needs think for the moſt part very idly and vain. His Thoughts will ſeldom be employed about that which is his Duty, nor will they be ſuch as will diſpoſe, or lead him to it.

3. We ſhould accuſtom our ſelves frequently to review, and reflect upon our Thoughts; to think what we have been thinking upon, and in what ſtrain and way our Thoughts have been employed. Let us endeavour always to know what paſſes within us; what we do with our own Minds, how we employ their noble powers; and commune with our own Hearts, as the *Pſalmiſt* adviſes. If we often do thus reflect upon our ſelves, we cannot be long idle, but we ſhall find our ſelves ſo, and ſo may rectify our ſelves; we ſhall apprehend our wanderings, and may prevent our wild Imagination from polluting us with

with evil Thoughts, and such as would actuate, and cherish evil Inclinations; and without this frequent reflection, 'tis impossible but we shall be often drawn away. Besides, if we are wont to call our selves thus to account, we shall come to reverence our selves, as the Philosophers speak; we shall become desirous to be always able to give a good account to our own Consciences of the employment of our Thoughts; we shall be liable to an wholesome Shame, for all the Follies, and Vagaries of our Minds; and so by degrees, we shall easily cure, and prevent the vanity of them.

4. *Lastly*, We should endeavour to accustom our selves to good and pious Ejaculations. Our constant dependance upon God, and Obligations to him every moment, and our constant danger, and proneness to fall into Sin, do greatly require this; and without doubt it is a rule of special Usefulness to cure the vanity, and levity of the Mind, and to make it always serious and wise, and directed to its main End, the glorifying of God. That which I mean by it, is this. Let us accustom our selves to make little short Addresses to God upon all occasions that occur to us; to which purpose the Holy Scripture affords us an abundant Supply. As for instance, When we awake in the Morning to say, *I laid me down, and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me:* When the Light of the Day comes; *The Heavens declare the glory of God, the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work.* When a man goes forth about his Business; *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my foot-steps slip not.* When we hear of any other mens Faults and Sins; *Lead me not into temptation, but*

but deliver me from evil. When we ſee Children; *One Generation ſhall praiſe thy Name unto another, and ſhall declare thy mighty Acts.* Thus we ſhall well employ our Minds; and beſides, thus we may ſet the *Lord always before us*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks; and ſo be poſſeſt with ſuch a conſtant Reverence of the Almighty, as ſhall make us careful of our Duty, and prevent this Idleneſs of Thoughts, and all the Miſchiefs of it. Which Grace, that may obtain, let us earneſtly ſeek it of Almighty God, and join the conſtant uſe of this Means with all the other.

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PRAYER.

O Lord, the Infinite, and Eternal Spirit, and Father of Spirits; who ſearcheſt the Hearts, and trieſt the Reins of Men, and from whom no ſecrets are hid. Thou, O Lord, we believe, knoweſt us altogether, and thou ſeeſt our Thoughts, even afar off. We are aſhamed to think how much vanity, and folly, and ſin thou haſt ſeen within us: How little our Minds have attended, and applied themſelves to our Duty, and to the main end of our Beings, the living to thy Honour and Glory. How ſeldom this comes into our Thoughts; What we were made for, what the Creator juſtly expects from us. Hence are our Minds ſo often engaged in that which does not concern us, and that which will not at all profit us; and ſo often employed in gratifying and exerciſing inwardly ſome ſinful, and fooliſh Inclination. While we neglect to ſet our Minds to that good Employment, which our Buſineſs and Duty gives us; our Adverſary the Devil, or our ſinful Inclinations, or the evil Company of the World, find them very ill Employment. And from hence do our Lives and Actions, wretchedly, and ſhamefully wander from the ways of thy excellent Commandments. Thus we do, inſtead of ſerving thee in Body, Soul, and Spirit, moſt unjuſtly, and unworthily ſin againſt thee in all. We ought to meditate on thy Law Day and Night, that we might bring forth fruit in due ſeaſon; to ſtudy thy Law, and learn thy Statutes; but we have been thoſe, that care not for the Knowledge of thy ways, and therefore we have not followed thy Paths. This, our way, O Lord, is our folly, we condemn, we abhor our ſelves for it; and own our ſelves, obnoxious to thy wrath, and deſerving that thou ſhouldſt reject us from thy Care; but ſince thy Goodneſs has yet been mindful of us, even while we forgot thee; we

hope

hope thy Mercy will receive us, when we return unto thee. Our Hope is in thy Word, which tells us, that to the Lord our God belong Mercies, and Forgiveneſs, tho we have rebelled againſt him. Forgive us then, O Lord, we pray thee, all our tranſgreſſions, upon the account of that great Propitiation, and Attonement which is made for us, by the precious Blood of thy Son, our only Saviour; for his ſake, look mercifully upon our Infirmities, and heal them. Vouchſafe to direct, ſanctifie, and govern, both our Hearts and Bodies in the way of thy Law, and in the works of thy Commandments. Cleanſe thou the Thoughts of our Hearts, by the Inſpiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may ſincerely love thee, and duly magnify thy Holy Name, truly ſerving thee, with Soul, and Body, which are thine. Lord have mercy upon us, and write all thy Laws in our Hearts, we beſeech thee: Enlighten our Darkneſs, cure our Ignorance with all neceſſary Knowledge of thee, and of thy Chriſt: Change our Wills, and turn the biaſs of them from this World towards thy Self; from empty, and vain Goods, to full and Subſtantial ones; from the pleaſures of Senſe, to the accompliſhments of the Mind; Make us more indifferent about our outward Circumſtances, and more concern'd about the inward State, and Diſpoſition of our Souls; and to account it our greateſt Felicity to do well, to pleaſe thee, and approve our ſelves unto thee. Make our vain and light Minds ſerious, and wiſe; furniſh us with the Gifts of thy good Spirit for every good work; for thou alone art the Giver of every Good, and every perfect Gift; it is by thee alone, O Lord, that we can be inabled to pleaſe thee; we alas! are not able of our ſelves to think a good Thought. Help us to ſet thee always before us in the frequent Thoughts of thee, and an habitual reverence, and fear of thee, that a ſenſe of thy continual preſence, and obſervance may reſtrain us from all evil, and encourage, and quicken us to mind, and do our Duty.

We humbly implore thy Mercy upon all Men: Convert unto thy Self all Jews, Turks, and Heathens; bring them from their ſeveral Ways of Vanity, to know and worſhip

worſhip thee the only true God by Jeſus the true Chriſt and Mediator. Give the Heathen for an Inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the Earth for a Poſſeſſion to thy well-beloved Son. Give unto thy Church all that is neceſſary to it, to amend, and purge away what is amiſs, and to ſupply what is defective in it, and to make it fruitful in all good Works; and that all who profeſs, and call themſelves Chriſtians, may have their Converſation ſuch as become the Goſpel.

Bleſs we pray thee, and defend theſe Nations in which we live: Bleſs us with a continuance of wiſe, and kind, and righteous Governours, and of loyal, peaceable, and obedient Subjects. Give peace in our Days, we humbly beſeech thee; for there is none we rely upon to fight for us, but only thou, O God. Eſtabliſh Truth among us for all Generations; bring into the way of Truth, all ſuch as have erred, and are deceived. Remember, in Mercy, all that are dear, and related to us. Give them things neceſſary for Life and Godlineſs. Guide them, O Lord, by thy Counſel through this world, and bring them at laſt unto thy Glory. Sanctify us by thy word, which has been this day ſpoken to us, and promote in us thereby all Vertue and Godlineſs of living. Forgive the wandring of our Minds in our attendance upon thee, and all other defects in our Duty, and comfort us with the light of thy Countenance. Be thou our gracious Protector this Night; for in thee alone do we put our Truſt. And if it pleaſe thee to allow another Day, and yet a longer time on Earth; Grant that it may be ſpent in thy fear, and in a diligent, and unwearied application to all that which is our Duty. This we humbly ask, and whatever thou ſeeſt to be moſt expedient for us, committing, and reſigning our ſelves entirely to thy Conduct and diſpoſal, and hoping in thy Mercy through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, we deſire to aſcribe all Praiſe and Glory, and Dominion, for ever, and ever.

Our Father, &c.

Of

OF

True Happineſs,

Wherein it lies

DEMONSTRATED.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Pſalm 4. 6, 7.

There be many that ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us

Thou haſt put gladneſs in my Heart, more than in the time that their Corn, and their Wine encreaſed.

IT is the natural and common deſire of Mankind to be happy, and is the End which they aim at, and propoſe to themſelves in their ſe-

veral Purſuits and Endeavours. But, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks here, *There be many that ſay, who will ſhew us good?* The *Many*, the *moſt* of men are at a great loſs in this Matter, and do not know where their true Happineſs lies, nor in what courſe or way to attain it. Their uncertainty in this Matter is repreſented by theſe words of the *Pſalmiſt*, and is too evidently ſeen in the common Practice of the World. The Human Nature is the ſame in all Mankind; we have all of us reaſonable, immortal Souls; we have all the ſame Capacities; And our Happineſs rightly, and truly conſidered, muſt be, to all, the ſame; The ſame Object muſt make all men Happy, and they muſt obtain that in the ſame way. But alas! how is the World diſtracted, and divided in the purſuit of Happineſs? Some of them running one way after it, and ſome another, and the moſt of them neglecting, and diverting from the true Object. With ſome there is no Felicity like the heaping up of Wealth; like the ſight of full Bags, or great purchaſes, and they delight in nothing ſo much as in gainful Bargains: With others there is nothing ſo pleaſant as to ſpend; and they delight in this as much as the others do in getting. The Pleaſures of this World are their beloved Felicity; to eat and drink, and riſe up to play. With others there is no Heaven like Honour and Command, the having Authority and Power among Men, the being courted, and ſought to, reſpected and obeyed. With ſome, how great a Felicity is it to be fine, and to have all things about them ſo? To have Themſelves, their Houſes,

their

their Entertainments, and all that belongs to them gaudy, and pompous, and much adorned. Thus are Mankind diſperſt, thus they wander in the purſuit of Happineſs: And thus the *Many* are taken up and employed in this great Concern.

Having expreſt the Uncertainty, and intimated the wandering of the Generality in this Affair: The *Pſalmiſt* next expreſſes what he ſought as the Object of Happineſs, in theſe words, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us.* Which is as much as to ſay, Lord let us have an Intereſt in thy Favour, regard us with kindneſs and Love; let us enjoy the Exerciſes and Benefits of thy peculiar Favour and Mercy. It might be ſhewn you by the uſe of this Phraſe in other places of Scripture, that this is the ſenſe and meaning of it.

When he had made this Requeſt, he adds the Reaſon of it in the following words of the Text; *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my Heart, more than in the time that their Corn and their Wine encreaſed.* Which words intimate, that he had received more Joy and Gladneſs from what enjoyment of the light of God's Countenance had been afforded him, that any others could ever derive from their Corn and Wine, or from the greateſt Encreaſe of them. He intimates that God is the true Object of our Happineſs; that the Favour of God expreſt and exerciſed towards us, is a far better Spring and Source of Content and Comfort, than the Profits and Pleaſures of this World can be. We may reckon that this is what we are taught in theſe words.

It ſhall be the Buſineſs of the preſent Diſcourſe chiefly to prove this which is here intimated to us; To ſhew that *David* was certainly in the right, and was well directed when this was his choice, and the chief deſire of his Soul to enjoy an Intereſt in the Favour of God.

The proof of this we ſhall abundantly derive from theſe two Heads of Diſcourſe. 1. From the Perſon Loving. 2. From the Benefits which his Love in the Exerciſe of it does beſtow.

Firſt, let us conſider well the Perſon Loving, and we cannot chuſe but conclude, That it muſt be the greateſt Happineſs imaginable to be the Object of his peculiar Favour. He is the Great God, the Creator of all Things, the Fountain Good, the Owner, and Lord, and the Diſpoſer of all things. As he is Owner and Diſpoſer of all things, every Creature has ſuch a Portion of Good, as he is pleaſed to allot it; and ſo we depend upon him, for to be as happy as this World can make us, ſince 'tis he that does unalterably aſſign to every one of us our meaſure of this World's Goods: But if we have an Intereſt in his peculiar Favour, who is Owner and Lord of Heaven and Earth, This includes at leaſt all the Goodneſs of Heaven and Earth: If God be ours, as he is, if we are his peculiar Favourites, then all elſe is ours too. The *Apoſtle* ſpeaking to ſuch Perſons ſays, *Whether the World, or Life, or Death, or things preſent, or things to come; All are yours,* 1 Cor. 3. 22. That is, you have ſuch an Intereſt in them, by your Intereſt in the Favour of God, that ye ſhall not want any of them, that is good and convenient for ye.

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In this is the Satisfaction of all our juſt Deſires contained, and the Supply of all our Wants: This is Reſt to the Weary, Eyes to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, Company to the Solitary. From him all other Beings derive all their Worth and Goodneſs: He then is the Sufficiency of All, and it muſt be from his Bleſſing upon them, that they have any Goodneſs and Suitableneſs, or Comfort in them: So that if we could have any thing elſe without his Favour, we ſhall, if he pleaſes, have but little help or comfort from it. But ſince all the Creatures, and whatever we can enjoy beſides him, have all their Goodneſs from him: He muſt have in him more than all, and the Enjoyment of him in his Love, muſt needs be more than any number of them we can get together.

It is the Love of him, who is Infinite in Power, who is an unexhauſtible Fulneſs: Who after all his Communications to Creatures, remains ſtill the ſame Infinite Source of Good. The Love of God then is richer than Ten thouſand Worlds: If we want any thing elſe, which this World cannot afford towards our Happineſs (and many ſuch Wants indeed is our wretched Nature ſubject to) He can beſtow it: We can want no good thing which he cannot give. The Love of God can ſupply the defect, and want of any thing elſe, and make us happy without it: This is Light without a Sun, Strength without Food, Health without Phyſick. *Altho the Fig-tree ſhall not Bloſſom, neither ſhall the Fruit be in the Vine. The Labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Fields ſhall yield no meat. The Flock ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stall; Yet will I*

rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation, said the Prophet, in the name of those whom God regards with his peculiar Favour and Love, *Hab.* 3. 17, 18.

From the Love of God we cannot expect too much: This is a Blessing which exceeds, and does not fall below our Expectations; we may rest in that, for we cannot imagine any thing beyond it, that we can desire: We may find more delight in that than we can conceive; it is so full, and able to bless, that we cannot desire so much as it can afford. *God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, beyond all that we are able to ask, or think.* What bounds can be set to Infinite Attributes, and the Exercise of them, so as to say, hitherto they can go, and no further? And what a boundless Pleasure, and Content must the Soul take, who is a Favourite of such Love? As God is Incomprehensible, his Love is Incomprehensible, and he whom it favours may say, I cannot conceive how rich I am in his Love, I am not able to conceive all the vast Felicity it contains, and gives me an Interest in.

Further, the Love of God is also, like himself, Eternal: This is a most lasting Portion then, it is durable Riches. As long as God endures who is Everlasting, and his Love which is Unchangeable, and the Soul of Man which is Immortal, so long may we enjoy the Felicity of his Favour, and the blissful Exercise of his Love. This is not a thing of a frail, or fading Nature: It is not one of those things which perish in the using, which make themselves wings very often, and fly away, which we cannot certainly enjoy all

all our Days on Earth, or which we must be certainly stript of, when we lie down in the Dust. This may certainly render us happy all our Days in this Life. *O satisfy us early with thy Mercy, so shall we rejoice, and be glad all our Days*, says the *Psalmist Psal.* 90. Intimating, That if they had an assured Interest in the Love of God, this would be a certain ground of Satisfaction and Content for all the Days of this their mortal Life. This is true, and besides, when we go away from this World, when we must leave for ever all that we enjoy of it, This may be our Portion still, and can bless us with the Goods of Eternity. And what Security and Peace is there in the Thought, that this may be an Everlasting Source of Blessings? How pure, and perfect, and high is the delight in this, while it is not allayed with the fears, or expectations of losing that which makes us so happy? Thus we may see, that the Person loving does mightily recommend the Love of God, and that we may from thence conclude the Happiness of those who are the Objects of it.

Now let us see further, how this does also appear in the Exercises or Benefits which his matchless Love bestows. From the former head we learn what great things it can do; from this, we shall see what it does, and has done: And we shall see, that as there is no Love like his, there is none so great as He, so there are no such Benefits any way to be obtained, as by his Love. These Exercises of Divine Favour are properly his lifting up of the Light of his Countenance upon us, and these are able to contribute more to our Happiness, than all

things in the world beſides them. The Benefits which the peculiar Favour of God beſtows, are theſe;

1. He does forgive and pardon all their Sins to them, who are thus the Objects of his Love. They become ſo by the Meritorious Death and Paſſion of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, which through their Faith is to them a Propitiation for Sin: And therefore the righteous Judge of all the World, being atton'd and reconciled, he will no more impute to them their Iniquity. And tho the imperfect Creatures, do too often offend, notwithſtanding all their Care, yet upon the renewal of their Repentance, and their daily asking the Pardon of their Sins, His Mercy for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, daily gives them their Pardon. Now every man that knows himſelf a Sinner, and that did ever ſeriouſly conſider what that imports, and what belongs to ſuch a Condition, cannot chuſe but acknowledge it an unſpeakable Benefit to have his Sins all forgiven; to be ſure it is really ſuch in its ſelf. The Man who is forgiven can think of God, and not be troubled, nor afraid, can put up his Requeſts to the Throne of Grace with aſſured, and comfortable Expectations. He that knows this of himſelf, knows too, that the great Obſtacle, and Impediment of the Exerciſes of Divine Mercy is removed, and he may hope that the Streams of it ſhall plentifully flow towards him: He may hope that his Iniquities ſhall not withhold good things from him. And what a Pleaſure is it to think of an Enemy reconciled, and become a faithful, affectionate Friend! And

eſpecially

eſpecially to know this of the Almighty and Eternal God! To know that Infinite, and Eternal Perfections, which were adverſe and angry, are reconciled, and become kind! How great, and how ſenſible a Bleſſing muſt it be for a man to be able to ſay; I, that was obnoxious to an Infinite, Eternal Wrath; I, that lay under the heavy load of a Juſt Curſe, which doom'd me to Everlaſting Flames, am now become an Object of Infinite and Eternal Love, and an Heir of Heaven! He, who might have treated me with Everlaſting ſeverity, I am ſure will now uſe me with Everlaſting loving kindneſs. The fooliſh and unreaſonable Ills, that I have done, and the baſe Affronts I have offered the great God, ſhall coſt me no more Sorrow, than that of a wholeſome Repentance. This is a very happy, and very pleaſant Change in a Man's Condition.

This Bleſſing introduces a Peace, that paſſes all underſtanding; and indeed a Peace, which the world cannot give. For I may add, that the aſſured Pardon of our Sins is abſolutely neceſſary to our taking any conſiderable Comfort, or Delight in any thing of this World; for without this, if we look into our Condition, we muſt know, that theſe are all forfeited things, that they are but lent us by the Patience of God; our tranquility, and proſperity depends upon the will of him, who is juſtly diſpleaſed with us for our Sins, and is daily provoked to put an end to it. The unpardoned Sinner cannot conſider his Condition, nor underſtand it, but he muſt be affrighted and troubled; for he muſt ſee, that the Sword of Divine Vengeance hangs continually

over

over his Head; and this muſt needs daſh all his Joy: But that is a very poor Felicity, which cannot endure to be reflected upon, and conſidered, which, if it be rightly underſtood, is ſpoilt and loſt; if it be examined, is none at all. If therefore we would have a Condition in this Life, which we may reflect upon, and conſider, and take delight to do ſo, we muſt have the Pardon of all our Sins aſſured, and God reconciled to us. And now I think, we may conclude this Head with the *Pſalmiſt's* words, *Pſal.* 32. 1, 2. *Bleſſed is the man whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered. Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity.*

2. Another bleſſed Exerciſe of the Divine Favour to the peculiar Objects of it is, that he does ſanctify them; that he reſtores that moſt excellent Part of the Divine Image, which we unhappily loſt in the Fall of our firſt Parents. We are taught, that this is a Fruit of his Love, *Eph.* 5. 25, 26. where it is ſaid, *Chriſt loved the Church, and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word*: that is, by pouring out upon them the ſanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit, who is compared to water. Thus he expreſſes and exerciſes his Love to them that are the Objects of it; And thus his Love grows from Compaſſion to a Complacency: He that pitied them in their wretched Pollution, loves them into loveline ſs: He ſo ſhines upon them with the Light of his Countenance, as to communicate Light and Brightneſs to them, ſo as to adorn them with the bright Rays of his own Glory; and then he takes delight in them.

But

But how great the Happineſs of this Effect is, let us ſee. This is an Exerciſe of Divine Love, which is exceeding Fruitful, and full of Joys and Bleſſings. A world of new Delights; this brings a man acquainted with that he never knew before, nor was capable of knowing, till this bleſſed Change was wrought in him. The Rectitude, and Order of the Soul, which this introduces, is as pleaſant as Health after Sickneſs; There is now Eaſe for Pain, Strength for Weakneſs, Freedom for Confinement, a comfortable Enjoyment of good things, without loathing of them; Life and Activity, without faintneſs, and wearineſs in well-doing; and the Pleaſure of an uſeful Life to our ſelves and others, inſtead of that which was a Burden, and a Trouble to both. He that is ſanctified has ſo far a well compoſed Mind: He has calm Paſſions, regular Appetites, right and true Thoughts, good, and wiſe, and ſafe Inclinations. He can do that which is good, which his Mind tells him he ought to do, which his Conſcience may applaud him for doing; That which will pleaſe God, and bring him Everlaſting Advantages.

He can delight in Good and Vertuous Actions; theſe have a great deal of a pleaſing Luſtre, and Beauty in them, and he has Eyes to ſee this now: He has a mind capable of, and exerciſed in the diſcerning of Spiritual things. Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Juſtice, Faithfulneſs in the exerciſes and expreſſions of them are as pleaſant to the Obſervation of a good Man, as the moſt lovely, and curious Colours are to a ſound Eye, or the moſt harmonious Sounds to a well diſpoſed Ear. And if the Vertues of a poor, imperfect Man

are

are a delight to him; How much more ſo muſt the Perfections of the Infinite God be in all the appearances, and exerciſes of themſelves? With what delight does he view the glorious Rays, and Beams of Divine Truth, and faithfulneſs, of Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs, of Goodneſs and Mercy, as they they appear in God's works of Creation and Providence, and are ſcattered about upon this lower World! He is capable of ſeeing ſome or other of the Divine Attributes every where; and in thoſe Diſpenſations, which he cannot underſtand, or reconcile to any other Attribute, he willingly acknowledges, and adores an Incomprehenſible Wiſdom.

The good Man by his ſpiritual and ſanctified State of Mind does take a new, and a higher delight in the Objects of his Senſes, than Beaſts, or Carnal men can do: He does not ſtop at a meer ſenſual delight in them, as they do, but has moreover, and beſides that, a very rational, and religious delight in them: He can pleaſe himſelf with admiring in them the traces and footſteps of God's glorious Perfections; In what is ſuitable, and pleaſing to his Appetites, He admires and delights in the Wiſdom of God, which adapted thoſe things, and made them ſo ſuitable, and that glorious Goodneſs, which affords ſo much Pleaſure and Happineſs to his Creature. He delights to praiſe, and love the Creator and Giver of the good things that he enjoys.

3. Another Exerciſe and Benefit of the Divine Love is, That he will favourably diſpoſe of all their Affairs in this World, for them who are the peculiar Objects of his Favour. It is true, the

the Scripture ſays, *Thoſe whom God loves, he does rebuke and chaſten*: And accordingly, they eſpecially, and above all men, ſhall not eſcape without Affliction, when their Spiritual Condition needs it: But when God does afflict them, he does this many ways favourably. His wiſe, and tender Love takes care, that their Afflictions ſhall never be too heavy for them, that they ſhall not continue too long, that they ſhall redound to their Spiritual, and perhaps produce ſome temporal Advantage. The fruit of them ſhall be to take away Sin; and ſo they ſhall cure and remove a far greater Evil than themſelves are: And it is an advance towards Happineſs, which is very conſiderable to cure a far greater Evil by a leſſer one, an Eternal Evil by a Temporal one. Their Afflictions ſhall bring forth the *peaceable fruit of Righteouſneſs*; and ſo, tho they are not joyous, but grievous in themſelves, yet they ſhall be exceedingly joyous in their Fruits and Effects; when they form in a Man a greater Fear of God, more Meekneſs and Humility; when they teach him Patience and Contentedneſs, indifferency towards this World, and deſires after a better: For theſe, and other good Effects of Affliction, upon thoſe whom God loves, we have reaſon to ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *Bleſſed is the man whom God chaſteneth, and teacheth out of his Law.*

But further, We muſt conſider, that God is a defence to thoſe whom he loves, and *David* could ſay, *God is my Refuge, as well as my Portion in the Land of the Living. Thou wilt bleſs the Righteous* (ſays he, *Pſal.* 5. 12.) *And with Favour wilt thou compaſs him, as with a Shield.* When he ſees it fitteſt for them, he keeps them ſafe from

from Calamites and Afflictions. So he preſerved *Noah* from periſhing in the Univerſal Deluge; ſo he reſcued *Lot* from the Flames of *Sodom*; ſo he ſaved the *Iſraelites* in the Red Sea, wherein he drowned the *Egyptians*. And the aſſured Protection of the Almighty is a great comfort and ſatisfaction in the weak and expoſed State of this preſent Life, where innumerable Evils always compaſs us about: Our own weakneſs and frailty, and the frailty and mutableneſs of all thoſe things whereof the Proſperity of this Life does conſiſt, render us continually liable to Vexation and Miſery. In this caſe, and upon this account, it is abſolutely neceſſary to us to have ſome good Hope of the Divine Protection, for the preſerving our Minds in any meaſure of Tranquillity and Peace, and to deliver us from the Wrackings, and Torments of continual Fears. How wretched may we ſee many Men, even in the midſt of a large Portion through the want of this Hope? They are even undone, for fear of being undone; ſome almoſt ſtarve themſelves out of the Fear, that they ſhall fall into want. This wretched anxiety hinders them from uſing what they have, and makes them want for fear of wanting it. Hence are thoſe Cares that devour the Thoughts of many Men, that tire, and ſpend their Bodies, that diſturb their Minds, that confound their Reaſon, that interrupt, and break their Sleep, and ſpoil the Enjoyment even of the beſt things they have: So unhappy are they while ſenſible of the mutableneſs of their Condition, and while they want an aſſured Truſt, and reliance upon the Providence

dence of God. But he whom God loves can rely upon him, he can expect ſafety from his ever-waking, and irreſiſtible Providence; and ſo is freed from the Torment of theſe Anxious Cares and Fears. The happy Author of this *Pſalm*, where our Text is, expreſſes ſomething of the Tranquillity and Peace of his Mind, which was the Effect of God's *lifting up the light of his Countenance upon him. I will both lay me down in peace and ſleep, for thou Lord only makeſt me dwell in ſafety*, Verſe 8.

And as the Man whom God loves, has theſe comfortable Expectations relating to the Evils, which this Life is expoſed to; ſo he may have as comfortable ones relating to the good things, that may be enjoyed here. Theſe are all of them the promiſed Portion of thoſe whom God loves; as the *Apoſtle* ſhews us, in ſaying, That *Godlineſs hath the Promiſe of the Life that now is, as well as of that to come.* And when 'tis ſaid, *Pſal.* 84: 11. *God will not with-hold any good thing from them that walk uprightly.* This is meant of ſuch. *They whom he loves, ſhall be ſure to want no manner of thing that is good for them.*

Now, how great Content and Satisfaction may a Man conceive from this Exerciſe of Divine Love, from God's continual Care of him, and his Affairs! Surely, this is the greateſt Felicity in this world, to have all our Affairs regarded by the Wiſe, and Almighty God the Diſpoſer of all things. To be, and know our ſelves always under the Eye and Care of ſuch a Friend: To have all our Intereſts regarded, as if they were his own: To have him take upon him.

himſelf the care of doing us good, and making us happy, of making every thing that befalls us, to redound to our Advantage. Indeed, this aſſurance muſt needs ſweeten every Evil that befals us, of what ſort ſoever it is, to think, This is ordered for me by him that loves me; by him that is as tender of my Well-fare, as I my ſelf could be; by him that is Infinitely wiſer than I, and knows what is beſt for me. How eaſy, and calm a condition may that Man's mind be in, at all times, who has this aſſurance?

Further, we muſt reckon that this conſideration exceedingly heightens the ſweetneſs of every good we enjoy. To conſider, this is the Favour of Heaven to me; I receive this Enjoyment from the peculiar Love of God to me. The enjoyment of that which is the Fruit of a Man's own Pains and Labour, adds much to the Pleaſure of the Enjoyment: But the Favour of God, and his Bleſſing contributes much more: When I can ſay, This that I now have, proceeds from that ſpecial Favour of Heaven, which takes care of me.

4. *Laſtly*, The peculiar Favour of God gives to thoſe whom he ſo loves, an aſſured, and ſafe Right and Title to the Everlaſting Bleſſedneſs, which is to come. They are the certain Heirs of Heaven. The Love of the Father is promiſed to them that believe in Chriſt: And this Love has promiſed to give them Eternal Life. His Love will never ceaſe bleſſing them, till it has made them perfectly Bleſſed: Till it has cured all their Imperfections, has ſupplied all their Wants, has removed from them all Evil, and

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ſet them ſafe in perfect Bliſs. This is the Condition of the Future Bleſſedneſs, which they are deſigned for: No deſirable Thing ſhall be wanting there, , neither ſhall any evil encumber it: And this ſhall be the Rich, and Bounteous, and Everlaſting Portion of thoſe whom God loves. They may expect, that the good Work of Sanctification, which is begun in them, ſhall be perfected unto the Day of Jeſus Chriſt: *That the Lord Jeſus will keep them from every Evil work, and preſerve them to his Heavenly Kingdom.* And how comfortably muſt a Man ſpend his Days under this joyful Expectation. Every thing here may mind him of his Home, the happy *Canaan* above: The good things here may tell him of better there; and when any of theſe pleaſe, he can ſay, How much more pleaſant are the things which are there? The Griefs on Earth may put him in mind of the Joys of Heaven; and when any thing troubles him here, he can conſider there is no ſuch trouble there. The Mutation of Earthly things, may call to his Mind the Stability and Durableneſs of the Heavenly; and this may comfort, when the other vexes him. How pleaſantly does he ſpend his Days, that is, all his Life long travelling towards Heaven. It does not trouble him to perceive his Time waſte, and ſpend its ſelf apace: His Heart, and Affections are removed to Heaven already, and he is glad that Time makes haſte to remove his Perſon thither too: He is glad to think that it is continually doing ſo. He knows that whenever Time ſhall commit him to Eternity, he ſhall go from lower degrees of Happineſs to higher; from

that which ſuffers ſome Interruptions here, at leaſt, as to the Senſe and Enjoyment of it, to that which ſhall never know any Interruptions. The Light of God's Countenance may have ſome Intervals of Darkneſs now mingled with it; but then it ſhall ſhine bright upon him for ever, and make a continually happy Day of Glory. He goes from a mixed Happineſs to a pure and perfect one: He does not go naked out of the World; but well provided for in another, ſince God will there be his everlaſting Portion, and exceeding great Reward.

Now I have done the Proof of this Truth, That the Favour of God, is the moſt deſirable Good, and the enjoyment of that, the beſt Spring and Fountain of our Happineſs and Comfort. I have dwelt long upon this (as I ſaid the Diſcourſe would chiefly be employed in it) and may, I think, be excuſed for ſtaying long among ſo many pleaſant Thoughts, as the Love of God ſuggeſts.

Application. I ſhall ſay but little now for Application of theſe things, becauſe I intend the following Diſcourſe to be Applicatory of this. For the preſent, let us reflect a little upon what has been ſaid.

And do not theſe things which have been ſaid of the Love of God, naturally lead us to condemn both in our ſelves, or others, all the neglect there is among us, of ſo matchleſs a Benefit? Is it not a wonderful thing, that Mankind ſhould neglect the Love of God? That it ſhould be common, and general among Men to have little or no Concern for an Intereſt in that? And yet it is thus with the World. The *Pſalmiſt* here does not ſay, *There be many that ſay, Lord, lift thou*

up

up the light of thy Countenance upon us: Alas! the *Many* follow other Goods, and neglect this; They ſpend their Labour for that which is not Bread, and their Mony for that which will not profit, and neglect the true Felicity. There is nothing ſo little minded in the World, as the ſecuring an Intereſt in the Love of God. There are many guilty of this, that do not obſerve it in themſelves. Let us ſee then, who muſt be charged with this Folly; that ſo we may diſcover what there is of it in our ſelves.

Some look upon the Love of God, as a thing that will come of its ſelf, without any ſeeking, or endeavours after it; and it is a very cheap thing in their Opinion of it: They have ſuch an Opinion of the Goodneſs of God, that they think he cannot be affronted, or diſpleaſed, but will love them, however they carry themſelves towards him: They think he will love them, tho they do not much care for his Love, tho they never ſeek, tho they continually forfeit and deſpiſe it: They think indeed, that he will caſt Pearls before Swine.

Many really do not value the Love of God, they do not conſider the Neceſſity and Worth of it. They have God himſelf very little in their Thoughts, and ſo they do not know, or they conſider not the Importance of an Intereſt in his Love. They do not conſider that an Over-ruling Providence mingles its ſelf with all things: That they have all they enjoy from him: That they muſt be Beholden to him for an Happy Life on Earth; and they baniſh utterly from their Thoughts all concern, and care about the Life to come.

Is not any thing preferr'd by a great many before this that comes in competition with it? Do they not value a little unprofitabl Gain, a little fooliſh Pleaſure, a little ſlippery Honour, and the moſt tranſient Gratifications of their deſires of any ſort, more than the Love of an Infinite, Eternal God? Do not men commonly expect their Happineſs from the things of this World; from what they can ſee, or taſte, or feel? Are not ſenſible things moſt ſenſible to the dull, and carnal Minds of Men? How little Charm, or Invitation has this thin, inviſible Bleſſing with it to a great many? They forget that the things which are not ſeen, are Eternal; That Spiritu-things are the greateſt, and the moſt conſiderable. Spiritual things are as nothing to them; they have not the Senſes of their Minds exerciſed to diſcern ſuch things.

And further: Are there not many, that never had a ſerious, enquiring Thought, whether they are in Favour with God or not? Whether the Almighty be to them a Friend, or an Enemy? That never did ſet themſelves down, ſeriouſly to examine into this Matter, or that would continue the enquiry till they came to a well-grounded Determination concerning their State: And do ſuch indeed deſire an Intereſt in the Love of God?

Are there not alſo many that take no care to pleaſe God, who follow their own Inclinations, without any regard to his Will and Laws, and ſo do daily affront, and diſpleaſe him? And and are theſe concern'd for an Intereſt in his Favour? Theſe that live in gainful, or pleaſant

Sins,

Sins, and will not be perſuaded to leave them for the Favour of God? Or, they that live in the habitual, conſtant Practice of the moſt needleſs Sins, ſuch as Swearing, Curſing, Backbiting, Slandering; or in the moſt miſchievous, and hurtful Sins, ſuch as Intemperance and Prodigality, and will not leave them for the Favour of God; Are they concern'd for an Intereſt in that?

How many beſides are there, that put off this Concern and Care, and bid it ſtand by till they have accompliſht ſome other Deſigns? Do they not think, that they may accompliſh Deſigns, which will be of Advantage to them without the Favour and Bleſſing of God upon them? Do they not think thoſe Deſigns more neceſſary, and advantagious to them than that? And is not this to ſlight, and undervalue that? To account it but a needleſs, or an indifferent thing? Thus it is but too evident, that a great many neglect this Bleſſedneſs.

And by theſe things we may underſtand our ſelves, if we will compare them with our own Carriage, and may ſee whether we have been in this Folly or not: And indeed it may hereby appear, that the beſt of us may charge our ſelves with having been too deep in it; that we have followed the things which are ſeen too much, and the unſeen things too little: We have loved, and ſought the Creature more than the Creator. But we muſt not obſerve this without making our ſelves ſenſible of the Guilt, and Folly of it, and Reſolutions to be careful for the future, that we may avoid it. Let this then be

the Matter of our Shame and Sorrow. Let us conſider how we muſt needs have offended God herein; That we have been guilty of the Idolatry of the Heart in loving, and ſeeking more the things of this World, than the enjoyment of God; that we have been herein very ungrateful to his Creating Goodneſs, in deſpiſing and neglecting that Happineſs which he made us capable to enjoy; that we have deſpiſed the Blood, and Death of the Redeemer, whereby an Attonement has been made for our Sins, and Salvation purchaſt for us at a coſtly Rate, even the Salvation which herein we have neglected. Let us own then, that we have greatly ſinned, ſo far as we have been guilty in this Matter, and have deſerved the moſt terrible Puniſhment: We have deſerved that God ſhould put us off with any thing rather than his Love, while we have been ſeeking any thing more than that: We deſerve to feel the everlaſting Terrors of his Anger, if we deſpiſe his Love; and may reckon it an amazing Inſtance of his Mercy and Patience, that we are yet ſpared, and have time to recollect, and amend our ſelves. Let us confeſs our Sin, and reſolve to amend it. Let us, by frequent conſideration of the Neceſſity, the Uſefulneſs, the Happineſs of God's Favour, bring our ſelves to have a mighty eſteem and value for it, and raiſe in our ſelves the moſt earneſt deſires, and longings after it. Let us readily put far away from us all things that will forfeit, and loſe the Favour of God. Let us be diligent and induſtrious in our Duty, in doing the things that will pleaſe him;

And

And then, let us *ask for this, and we ſhall receive it; Let us ſeek, and we ſhall find; let us knock, and this full Treaſury of Bleſſings, ſhall be opened to us.*

THE PRAYER.

INfinite, and Almighty Lord our God: Thou art he who haſt made the Heavens and the Earth, and the Sea, and all that is in them; Thou art the Fountain Good, and the ſufficiency of every Creature in Heaven and Earth. We acknowledge, O Lord, it is in thee that we live, move, and have our Being, and all our freſh Springs are in thee. Thou art an Infinite Good, and after all thy Communications to thy Creatures doſt remain the ſame; In thee ſtill, does all Fulneſs dwell. To thee, O Lord, do we poor and miſerable Creatures make our humble Addreſſes: Thou alone haſt the words of Eternal Life; Thou only, canſt make us happy; In thy Favour is Life, even Eternal Life, and thy loving kindneſs extends beyond the bounds of our preſent mortal Life. Oh Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us, and bleſs, and be merciful unto us: Enlighten our darkneſs, ſtrengthen our weakneſs, ſanctify our unholy and polluted Natures; communicate of thy fulneſs to the ſupply of all our wants, that we may rejoice in thy Goodneſs, and always live to thy Glory. Lord, we humble and abaſe our ſelves before thee, for that we have heretofore ſo little valued thy Favour, or concern'd our ſelves to enjoy it: We fooliſh Creatures have been ready to prefer any thing before it; we have valued the gratifying of impertinent and unreaſonable deſires, the getting a little worldly Gain, the enjoying a little ſenſual Pleaſure, above the matchleſs Bleſſings of thy Love. We have not believed thy Goodneſs, nor been able to truſt thy Favour and Love, to take care of, and provide for us. Thus are we exceeding guilty, and while we remain thus eſtranged from thee, we can never be happy. We beſeech thee, O Lord, deal not with us after

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our Sins, neither reward us according our to our Iniquities: When we humbly confeſs our Sins, do thou graciouſly forgive them, and cleanſe us from all our unrighteouſneſs. Make us for the future to value thy Love above all things; and therefore to ſet our ſelves with great care to do thoſe things that are well-pleaſing in thy ſight, and to avoid whatever is offenſive to the pure Eyes of thy Glory. Let us be ſenſible that it is only the pure in Heart that can ſee thee, and therefore be indnſtrious to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in thy Fear. Lord, we give thanks for thy Forbearance and Patience towards us, that thou haſt not yet cut us off, and ſent us to Eternal miſery; that we have yet Means of Grace, and Hopes of Glory: Let thy Goodneſs, and Forbearance lead us effectually to unfeigned Repentance, and end in a full remiſſion of all our Sins. Transform us into thy likeneſs by the renewing of our Minds, and let the light of thy Countenance beautify and adorn us: Love us into lovelineſs, Oh thou Almighty Love, that thou mayeſt then delight in us, and we as we ought, may have our chief delight in thee.

We pray thee, ſhew Mercy to all Mankind: Pour out thy Spirit upon all Fleſh, that they may know thee, and ſeek thee, and find, and praiſe thee, and rejoice in thy abundant Goodneſs. Let thy continual Pity cleanſe, and defend thy Church. Lord, look down in mercy upon us, and bleſs us, that all the ends of the World may fear thee. We pray thee do good to theſe Nations in which we live, according thy infinite Sufficiency, and our Neceſſities: Oh let not our Iniquities with-hold good things from us, but according to the multitude of thy tender Compaſſions, blot out all our Tranſgreſſions: Bleſs our Gracious King and Queen; and make the one a Nurſing Father, and the other a Nurſing Mother to that part of thy Church, which thou haſt planted among us; and let their good Influence extend further to the Benefit of it, and make Them the Honourable Inſtruments of Eſtabliſhing Peace and Truth, not only in theſe, but alſo in the Neighbouring Nations, to the

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Glory of thy great Name. Bleſs all Ranks, and Degrees of Men among us, and make them to live to thy Glory, to be conformable, and obedient to our Governours, and uſeful, peaceable, righteous, and charitable one towards another in their ſeveral Stations. We humbly pray for all Friends, Relations, Benefactors; bleſs, and preſerve them from every evil Work, and conduct them to thy Heavenly Kingdom.

Let this Day, Oh Lord, be happy to us in the fruitful, and effectual Influences of thy Ordinances upon our Hearts and Lives: Let us not be forgetful Hearers, but be Doers of thy Word, that we may be bleſt in our Deed. Grant us to lie down in Peace this Night, to reſt in Safety: And be thou, O God, our Portion and Refuge in the Land of the Living, and hereafter our exceeding great Reward, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe Name and Words, we further preſent our Requeſts unto thee, ſaying,

OUR *Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil.* Amen.

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THE Heavenly Mind, DESCRIBED and URGED.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Coloſ. 3. 2.

Set your Affections on Things above, and not on things on the Earth.

HOW well did the Bounteous Creatour of all things contrive the Nature of Man, for the making him exceedingly Happy! He put into our Conſtitution an Immortal Spirit, join'd to a Living and Senſible Body: And ſo he made us capable of the Delights of both Worlds, the Spiritual, and the Material. By our Souls we

we are capable to enjoy, and delight in Spiritual Objects, and their Properties and Qualities: We are capable of a rational, ſpiritual Delight in ſenſible Objects; and we are capable to enjoy, and delight in God himſelf, and his Infinite, Eternal Perfections. And by our Bodies, which are allied to this World, we are capable of a ſenſual Delight in the things of it; to enjoy and pleaſe our ſelves with the Properties, Vertues and Qualities belonging to Material things. So bounteous and kind was the Creatour to Man, in the Forming of him.

But, alas! Man has not been kind to himſelf: He did not remain long in the happy State which he was firſt ſet in; but by following too much the Pleaſures of his Senſe, he loſt all the greateſt Pleaſures of his Mind. By eating the Forbidden Fruit, he ſinned againſt God; loſt his Favour, and the Enjoyment of him; became alienated from God; and his Mind became ſubject to the ſhameful Diſeaſe of Senſuality. A low, and ſordid Propenſity to Earthly things, did from henceforth poſſeſs him, and a wretched Incapacity, and Averſeneſs towards Heavenly and Spiritual things. We are condemned to enjoy only the loweſt, and weakeſt, and the leaſt part of our Happineſs; to gnaw, as it were, on the Shell of Pleaſure, and enjoy no more than the Brute Beaſts do. We following the unhappy Fall of our Nature, do amuſe, and entertain our ſelves only with the poor Objects of Senſe, utterly forget, and neglect our higher Capacities, and our true Happineſs. It is the whole Buſineſs of our Religion in all the parts of it, to recover us from this ſhameful, and deadly Fall; to draw

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us off from this our wretched Attachment to this World; and turn us from a falſe Happineſs to a true one. The ſcope and aim of all its Doctrins, Precepts, Promiſes, Threatnings, Motives and Aſſiſtances is this, to make us truly happy: And the Sum of all is, to bring us to what the *Apoſtle* here exhorts to, in ſaying; *Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.*

By *Things above*, he means thoſe very things which were recommended to you, by the Diſcourſe immediately foregoing this, as the chiefeſt, and the true Objects of our Happineſs: He means God himſelf, who is our Chief Good, and the Expreſſions, and Exerciſes of his peculiar Favour and Love. He means the Graces which the Holy Spirit works into the Souls of Men, which perfect, and adorn, and compoſe the Mind: He means the everlaſting Bleſſedneſs which is to come, the Happineſs and Joys of Heaven.

By adviſing to *ſet our Affections* on thoſe things, he means they ſhould be much the Objects of our Minds; he intends the Application of the whole Soul to them, and the employing of all our Powers about them. The Original word, which we render here *ſet your Affections*, has this large Import, and Signification, and might be rendered, *Mind thoſe things which are above*: Let your Judgments eſteem them, your Wills chuſe, and your Affections follow them.

And not on Things on the Earth: that is, rather than the Things of the Earth. It is according to the Cuſtom and Phraſe of the *Hebrew Language*, to expreſs thus, when it only intends to prefer the former things it ſpeaks of, before the latter.

latter. So in *Hoſ.* 6. 6. The Prophet, in the Perſon of God, ſays; *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice:* that is, rather than Sacrifice, he intended to expreſs God's preference of Mercy before Sacrifice. Here then the *Apoſtle*, who was an *Hebrew* of *Hebrews*, ſpeaking after the Phraſe, and Manner of his own Language, muſt be underſtood to mean, *Set your Affections on Things above, rather than on Things on the Earth:* Mind thoſe Things moſt; let them have the preference with you. He does not forbid, nor does our Religion forbid the moderate ſeeking, and enjoyment of the Good things of this World. We are not bound to be unſenſible of their Goodneſs, to take no delight in them, nor abſolutely, and wholly to refuſe, or reject all ſenſual Pleaſures. The things of this World are good in their Kind and Degree, and are uſeful and neceſſary to us in our preſent State, and we may enjoy them with delight, and give God Thanks for them. But ſtill we muſt prefer the *things above*, to theſe *below*; Spiritual Things to Material, the better, and nobler things to thoſe that are worſe, and of a meaner Nature.

It ſhall be the Buſineſs of this Diſcourſe (by God's Aſſiſtance) to explain or expreſs to you more largely and particularly, the Import and Meaning of the *Apoſtle*'s exhortation here: And then to urge our Obedience to it, with a few proper Motives: And thus will this Diſcourſe (as it was intended) be very Applicatory of that which goes before it.

Explication. In the firſt Place, I ſhall ſhew you how we ought to mind and apply our ſelves to the

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things above: With how much Concern and Care we ſhould ſeek the Favour of God, the matchleſs Bleſſings of his Love, and the enjoyment of him therein. This I ſhall repreſent to you under theſe three Heads;

1. The *Things above* muſt have the Preference of our Judgments: We muſt eſteem, and value them before all other.

2. They muſt have the Preference of our Wills and Affections; We muſt chuſe, and love them, deſire and delight in them, more than in any other.

3. They muſt have the Preference of our Actions, and Courſe of Life. We ſhould ſeek, and purſue them more than all other things.

I ſhall particularly inſiſt and enlarge my Diſcourſe upon each of theſe ſeverally, for the better Illuſtration of them.

1. Thoſe things ought to have the Preference of our Judgments: We ſhould eſteem and value them as the beſt things. We muſt account God our Chiefeſt Good, and the enjoyment of him in his Love the higheſt Felicity: This ſhould be the ſetled, and fixed Judgment of our Souls; a Concluſion deliberately, and firmly made. The *Apoſtle* who gives this Direction in our preſent Text, expreſſes thus concerning himſelf, when he ſays, *Phil.* 3. 8. *I count all things but dung, that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him*; that is, That I may through him have an Intereſt in God, and in the Bleſſings of his peculiar Love. This has been the conſtant Practice and State of all good and rectified Souls. *Thy loving kindneſs is better than life*, ſays *David*, *Pſal.* 63. 3. *More*

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to be desired are thy Commandments than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold, sweeter also than the Hony, and the Hony-comb, Psal. 19. This preference and esteem of *things above*, is several times expresst by *Solomon*, in the words which he puts into the Mouth of a Holy Soul, in his Book of *Canticles*, in *Chap.* 1. *Verse* 2. She says to Christ, *Thy Love is better than Wine.* The expressions and exercises of thy Favour are better far, and more chearing and refreshing to the Mind, than the richest Wines are to the faint and thirsty Body. Again, she says, *Chap.* 2. 3. *As the Apple Tree among the Trees of the Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons.* He is to be preferred before all other. Yea, she says in plain Terms, *Chap.* 5. 10. *He is the chiefest among Ten thousand.* These are all of them the expressions of such Souls, as mind the *things above*, *rather than those below*, and prefer Spiritual Objects before Sensual. God must have the Ascendant in our Souls. He who truly is the Chiefest Good, must be accounted so. We must believe him the Center and Source of all Goodness; the Fountain and Giver of all that which is in the Creatures. And that he has not given away from himself what he has communicated to them, but is still an inexhaustible Fulness of Good: That in him does all desirable Fulness dwell; and that he alone is able to afford full Content and Happiness to the Soul of Man. We must account it a much happier State to enjoy the *things above*, *than the things below*: Much better to be vertuous and good, than rich and great, to enjoy the Favour of God, than the Esteem of Men. And if we have the greatest

greateſt value and eſteem for the *things above*, we ſhall value all other things according to the relation which they bear to them. Thoſe things which have a ſubſerviency to them, and are means of attaining them will be valued next to them, and will for their ſakes be in great eſteem too: Such are Prayer, Hearing the Word of God, Reading, and Meditating on it, and the Attendance upon Sacraments. And again: Thoſe things which are contrary and oppoſite to theſe, which hinder the enjoyment of them, will not be lookt upon as Indifferent, they will be accounted very evil things, and be abſolutely rejected from all eſteem with us; Such are all manner of Sins and Wickedneſſes. Thus muſt the *things above* have the Preference of our Judgments.

2. They muſt alſo have the Preference of our Wills and Affections. We muſt chuſe them before all other things; love, deſire, and delight moſt in them. When thoſe things are propoſed, deſcribed, and offered to us, we muſt not regard them with indifferent, and careleſs Minds. Our Souls muſt be moved towards them, in chuſing, accepting, and deſiring above all things to be Partakers of them. This alſo has been the Temper of good Souls, as the Expreſſions that have fallen from ſuch do abundantly declare. The Holy Author of *Pſal.* 73. ſays to God, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth that I can deſire beſides thee.* The Spouſe in the *Canticles* ſays, *Cant.* 1. 2. *Let him kiſs me with the Kiſſes of his Mouth.* That which I chiefly deſire is, to receive the expreſſions of thy matchleſs Love. And in *Verſe* 4. ſhe ſays,

We will be glad, and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy Love more than Wine. If we can enjoy thy Favour, Oh Jeſus, lover of Souls; This is that we moſt value, This is all we care for, This is that will be moſt pleaſing to us. Ardent Deſires after God, the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes, *Pſal.* 42. 1, 2. *As the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks, ſo panteth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul thirſteth for God, for the living God; when ſhall I come and appear before God!*

If we are not aſſured of an Intereſt in the peculiar Love of God, we ſhould moſt earneſtly and inceſſantly deſire this: We ſhould make it the chief ſubject and matter of our Prayers. The want of this ſhould not be ſatisfied, and madeup with any thing elſe. Let us never ſay to our ſelves upon the moſtplentiful Enjoyment of theſe things, as that Man whom our Saviour deſcribes, *Luke* 12. who ſaid, *Soul, take thine eaſe, becauſe thou haſt Goods laid up for many years.* Our Souls muſt take no Eaſe, nor ever be at Reſt, till we have *Goods laid up for Eternity.* God muſt be the only Center of our Hopes and Aims: We ſhould love him with a tranſcendent Love. Nothing ſhould grieve, or trouble us, ſo much as what does damp our Hopes of Heaven; nothing ſo much tranſport and pleaſe, as what does raiſe, and promote, and confirm them.

If we have been ſo happy as to gain an Intereſt in his Favour, and to be in ſome meaſure Partakers of the Bleſſings of his Love, it will be the Temper of our Minds to delight greatly in the *things above*; highly will the Thoughts of our Happineſs pleaſe us; we ſhall be able to ſay of God,

God, as *David* did, *My Meditation of him ſhall be ſweet, I will be glad, or rejoice in the Lord*, Pſal. 104. This will be the chief delight and ſolace of the Heavenly Soul to think; *God loves me, the moſt High has a peculiar favour for me; This God is my God, for ever and ever:* With higheſt Pleaſure will the Soul ſay, *My Beloved, is mine, and I am his: There is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs.*

And if ſuch be the moſt welcome and pleaſant Thoughts, it cannot be but they will be very frequent ones. *Oh how I love thy Law* (ſays *David*) *It is my Meditation all the Day*, Pſal. 119. 97.

When we can let many Days paſs over our Heads, without one ſerious and ſenſible Thought of Heavenly things, this is a Symptom of an Earthly, and Carnal Mind. The Heavenly Mind is neceſſitated, and drawn to other Thoughts, but it enclines to theſe.

And the Sabbaths, and publick Worſhip of God are a great delight to ſuch a Man: When he may be ſeparated from the Concerns of the World, to contemplate the Riches of God's Love, to taſte the ſweetneſs of it, to conſider the Beauty of Holineſs, and the Joys of Heaven. The Senſe of his Soul is the ſame with that which *David* expreſſes, *Pſal.* 84. 10. *A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thouſand; I had rather be a Door-keeper in the Houſe of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs.* And *Solomon* puts a mighty value and eſteem for the Worſhip and Sacred Ordinances of God, and an exceſſive delight in them into the Character of a devout Soul, which he gives us in his ſublime Song, *Cant.* 2. 34. 5. where after he had made her ſay, *As the*

Apple-tree among the Trees of the Wood, ſo is my Beloved among the Sons: She carries on the Metaphor, and ſays, *I ſate down under his Shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was ſweet unto my taſte. He brought me into the Banquetting-houſe, and his Banner over me was love.* And being thus entertained with his Love, ſhe is tranſported with delight, ſhe is, as it were, overwhelmed with Joy: *Stay me with Apples* (ſays ſhe) *Comfort me with Flaggons, for I am ſick of love.* Which is as much as to ſay, Thy Love, dear Lord, is great like thy Self, and far greater than my narrow Capacity! When I conſider, when I feel it, when I enjoy the exerciſes of it in Holy Communion with thee, I am, me thinks, my ſelf, all Love; I am tranſported in Extaſies of Love; and the Love I feel in my ſelf, and the delight I take in thine, are a Pleaſure even too great forme without thy aſſiſtance to bear it. If our Mind and Heart were truly ſet on *things above*; we ſhould go from Publick Devotion to Private, either in our Cloſets or Families: Certainly, he that loves thoſe things, and wiſhes to be employed to Eternity about them, cannot think One whole Day in Seven too much to be ſeparated entirely from the World, for the enjoyment of them. And the Heavenly Soul will be often diſcourſing of Heavenly things. It is a Pleaſure to ſpeak of that we extreamly love: The Holy Soul repreſented in the *Canticles*, does ſo often extol her Beloved, and ſo ſtay and dwell upon the Deſcriptions, Commendations and Diſcourſes concerning Chriſt, as does ſufficiently ſhew, *He is indeed her Beloved.* The Society therefore wherein ſuch an one may beſt diſcourſe

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of his Heart's chief Joy, will be always moſt acceptable, and deſirable to him. Thoſe that value highly the ſame things that we value and love, will be moſt agreeable to us, eſpecially in ſuch caſes where there can be no rivalling of each other, as it is in this. Heavenly Souls will be moſt acceptable to the Heavenly. And the Joy and Pleaſure which attends the Thoughts and Remembrance of thoſe heavenly Things, which they are partly poſſeſt, and partly in expectation of, will be able in a little time at leaſt, to overcome every worldly Sorrow.

Laſtly; If we value and love Heaven, and *things above, more than things on the Earth*, we muſt greatly deſire to be in Heaven. We muſt needs deſire to be advanced to that State where we ſhall more perfectly enjoy thoſe things than we can here; where we ſhall be ſatisfied with the communicated likeneſs of God in our perfect and compleat Sanctification, where we ſhall enjoy perfect Reſt and Bleſſedneſs; we cannot chuſe but deſire that State, where, as we ſhall have a fuller enjoyment of the things we moſtly love, ſo the enjoyment of them ſhall be more conſtant and uninterrupted; where we ſhall have the light of God's Countenance always ſhining bright upon us; where no Clouds, no Eclipſes ſhall hide, or any Night ever take it from us, but it ſhall make a continual joyful and glorious Day. The Soul then that does truly reliſh and delight in theſe Divine things, cannot be ſatisfied to be here, but will, with ſubmiſſion to the Will of God, long for the time of his removal to that better State. He will not think his Life on Earth too ſhort, but rather too long: and be ready

to ſay, When will this my tedious Pilgrimage be over? *When ſhall I come and appear before God!* He is not only contented, but even deſirous with St. *Paul*, *To depart, and to be with Chriſt.* He can willingly forſake, not only a poor, mean, and laborious State on Earth; but even a rich, proſperous, and eaſy one, for the better Enjoyments of Heaven: For that which he enjoys of Heaven here, is that which he chiefly delights in. And ſince the ſecond Coming of Chriſt is that which brings him his full Redemption, and the perfect Fruition of all that he deſires, he will greatly long for that; he will be one of thoſe that *love his Appearing.* He has the Spirit of the Bride in him, who ſays, *Come Lord Jeſus, come quickly*, in *Rev.* 22. Or as the holy Souls before his firſt Coming, in longing deſire after that, *Cant.* 8. 14. He will ſay for his Second, *Make haſte, my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe, or to a young Hart upon the Mountains of Spices.* Thus muſt our Will and Affections prefer the *Things above.*

3. Thoſe things muſt have alſo the Preference of our Actions, and Courſe of Life. And it is a certain conſequent and fruit of the other two Particulars, and the beſt Indication of them in us, that we chiefly endeavour after, and moſtly ſeek and purſue the *Things above.*

It is neceſſarily included in the minding thoſe *Things*, that we ſeek them, and endeavour to be Partakers of them. We muſt *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; we muſt *give diligence, to make our Calling and Election ſure*; we muſt *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* Strong and true deſires after any other things, will excite

excite ſuitable Endeavours; therefore it muſt be ſo with us in this Caſe. And thus it was with the good Soul, whoſe Affections towards God, *Solomon* deſcribes; who is repreſented by him, as very Inquiſitive after him: She lov'd in his abſence; as reſtleſs in her enquiry and ſearch, till ſhe *had found him whom her Soul loved*, Cant. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4. Lazy wiſhes are of no value: Till we come to active Deſires and very vigorous Endeavours, we have not an Heart ſet upon the *Things above*. We muſt very diligently uſe the Means that God has appointed, and does afford us for the making us Partakers of thoſe things: The ordinary Means of attaining the Sanctification of our Nature; the aſſured Pardon of our Sins; the Beams of Divine Favour, and a Title to Everlaſting glory: And they are Private, and Publick Prayers; the Preaching of God's Word, and his Sacraments. Theſe muſt be valued as Means, as I ſaid before; and alſo, I ſay now, they muſt be very diligently attended upon, and uſed. It muſt not be an indifferent Matter with us, whether we enjoy them or not.

If we rightly, and heartily deſire heavenly Things, we ſhall be very diligent and induſtrious in that Courſe of Duty, which the Providence of God gives us; whatever Station we are in, we ſhall endeavour to adorn it, to glorify God by our Behaviour in it: We ſhall be *ſteadfaſt, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, and ought to be ſo; *as knowing, That our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord:* As believing, that the glorious and eternal Rewards of Heaven deſerve our greateſt diligence, and labour in our Duty.

And further; if we rightly mind the *things above* we ſhall ſet our ſelves as much as we need to remove the Hindrances of attaining them. We ſhall, and ought to be ready to *cut off a right Hand, and pluck out a right Eye, that offends*, and that would hinder our entrance into Life. We muſt not entertain, or cheriſh any Sin; but muſt induſtriouſly mortify, weaken, and ſubdue all carnal and corrupt Affections. We muſt endeavour the weaning our ſelves, as much as may be from the World, and to be as indifferent about our outward Condition in it as we can be. We muſt ſhake off all ſuch Clogs and Weights, that our freed Souls may without Incumbrance, aſpire towards Heaven.

And we muſt *chiefly* ſeek and purſue the *Things above*, ſeek them with more diligence and endeavour, with more earneſt Application of Mind than we do *the Things below*. This our Saviour expreſly directs, *Mat. 6. 33. Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, and this he ſeems to intimate we ſhould do, when he ſays, *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.*

As the Heavenly things are to be the end, ſo they are to be the Rule and Guide of our Actions. We muſt value all other things according to their ſubſerviency to thoſe, as has been ſaid; and then the things of this World are to be ſought, only in ſuch circumſtances, or ſuch kinds of them, as they may have ſome ſubſerviency to theſe: For inſtance, A man ſhould chuſe that Employment and State in the World, in which he may beſt preſerve his Innocence, and keep a good Conſcience, and have frequent and chear-

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ful Communion with God; rather than that which is more dangerous, but is likely to have more of worldly Profit, or ſenſual Pleaſure attending it. A man ſhould rather chuſe a Life of Labour and Employment, wherein he may be ſerviceable to God, and to the preſent, or everlaſting Well-fare of Mankind; than to live in an uſeleſs Eaſe and Idleneſs. Again, the *Things above* muſt always be followed before theſe, whenever there is any Competition between them. We muſt when 'tis neceſſary forſake theſe for them. If we might enjoy the greateſt Pleaſures of this World, or the moſt valued Advantages of it, thoſe which would give us the greateſt Intereſt and Reſpect among Men; but for the gaining of theſe, we muſt do thoſe things that would forfeit and loſe the Favour of God; thoſe things which he forbids: We muſt then forſake and abandon all thoſe things for the ſake of this, and reſolve never to enjoy even the greateſt advantages of this World, if we cannot have them with the Favour and Bleſſing of God. Thus ſhould we in the Courſe of our Life and Actions, prefer the *Things above, before thoſe below.*

Motives. Thus I have ſhewn you what it is which the *Apoſtle* exhorts to here in the full Latitude and Extent of it. All this he intends we ſhould do in minding the *Things above.* It remains now, that I urge your Obedience to this Advice by ſuch Arguments and Motives, as may juſtly prevail upon you.

1. And in the firſt Place let this be one, That, unleſs we thus mind the *Things above*, we ſhall never obtain them. We are not to look upon our Text as only an Advice or Counſel, but muſt receive

receive it as a Law and Precept: It is thus we *ought* to mind thoſe things: And it is the plain Import of divers other places of Scripture, that God requires this of us. This is meant, when our Saviour ſays, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*, Mat. 22. 37. And when he ſays, *If any man come unto me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple*, Luke 14. 26. That is, in compariſon to me, he muſt hate and deſpiſe them. He muſt love and value me more than he does them, or he is not worthy of an Intereſt in the Favours and Bleſſings, which I have purchaſed. And there is another Scripture very expreſs to this purpoſe, but which has been wreſted by bad Tranſlation to a very different one, which I ſhall therefore here endeavour to recover to its right uſe: It is *John* 21. 15. *Jeſus ſaith to* Simon Peter; Simon *Son of* Jonas *loveſt thou me more than theſe.* The Original words would bear the rendering of them thus, *Loveſt thou me more than theſe things*, that is, more than thy Trade, and worldly Buſineſs, and Gains. The generality of the Church of *Rome* chuſe to render them thus, *Loveſt thou me more than theſe do?* As if our Lord would ſeem to expect in *Peter* a greater Love to him, than was in the reſt of the *Apoſtles*, and this muſt be the Foundation for *Peter*'s Primacy among the *Apoſtles*, and for the Pope of *Rome* his Supremacy in the Church. But if we well conſider the Context, we ſhall find this a very weak Foundation; we ſhall ſee no reaſon to think that the Queſtion intimates our Lord's preſent,

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or intended Preference of *Peter* to the reſt of the *Apoſtles*; but rather that it intimates an Admonition of *Peter* to prefer our Lord, and his Intereſts and Service before the Things of the World. When our Lord was dead, and his Diſciples were now come to *Galilee*, according to his Appointment to meet him there; while they ſtaid there, *Peter* returned to his Trade of Fiſhing, and drew the reſt of the Diſciples who had been of that Employment to join with him. After they had had a Night of fruitleſs Labour, Jeſus in in the Morning preſents himſelf to them; and as they were eating in his preſence, he propounds this Queſtion to *Peter*, in *Verſe* 15. Now he had reaſon to ſingle out *Peter* to this Examination, becauſe it was he that had made the motion of this return to their worldly Buſineſs, and had drawn the others to it after he had ſeparated them to be *Fiſhers of Men*. And ſince this was plainly the occaſion of the Queſtion, we may moſt reaſonably interpret it to intimate a Rebuke of that *Apoſtle* for this return to his Trade; and what our Lord replies to *Peter*'s Anſwer to his Queſtion, does ſufficiently juſtify, and even require this Interpretation of it; for he ſays to him three times, *Feed my Lambs*, or my Sheep, which was as much as to ſay to him, Shew thy Love to me, if thou haſt it by betaking thy ſelf intirely, and induſtriouſly to the Office of an *Apoſtle*, and leave this worldly Trade and Buſineſs, from which I have called thee. This then is without doubt the meaning of this Place. The Queſtion of our Lord intimates, that he required of St. *Peter*, that he ſhould love him more than worldly Gains, more than his Trade, and the Buſineſs that he had

had called him from, and ſhould accordingly apply himſelf to that Service of him, which he had called him to.

This then is a ſtanding Law and Rule, and Univerſally obliging, That we love God more than the Things of the World. And if ſo, it is, we may be ſure, a neceſſary condition to be performed for our partaking of the *Things above*. If God requires us to prefer them, we cannot but without ground expect, that he will ever beſtow them upon us unleſs we do ſo. He has not made this Law only to diſpenſe with it, but to guide us to our Happineſs thereby if we will obey it, or to condemn us to miſery, if we will not.

2. To encourage our ſelves thus to prefer the *Things above*, we may conſider that if we do ſo, we ſhall certainly obtain them. We ſhall not ſet our Hearts upon them in vain. *God is a rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek them*, Heb. 11. 6. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for Glory, Honour and Immortality*, God will give *eternal Life*; the *Apoſtle* aſſures us, *Rom.* 2. 7. In this courſe we ſhall be ſure not to run in vain, nor to labour in vain. It pleaſes God that we deſpiſe the preſent Allurements and good things of this World in compariſon to the matchleſs Bleſſings of his Love. Therefore *Moſes* is commended for having done ſo, when he *eſteemed the reproach of Chriſt greater Riches than the Treaſures of Egypt; and choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a Seaſon*, Heb. 11. 25, 26. This *renders* any that do it, the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, as is plainly intimated, *Heb.* 11. 16. where 'tis ſaid of ſome, *They deſired a better*

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Country, even an Heavenly, therefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God: He thought fit, he was pleaſed to own a peculiar relation to ſuch Perſons; he was willing to be *called* their God, that is, to *be* their God; and it is added in the ſame *Verſe*, *He hath prepared for them a City*: Since Heaven was that they chiefly deſired, he intended them for Heaven.

3. *Laſtly*, It may be another encouragement to what the *Apoſtle* here requires, That if we do thus prefer the *Things above*, God will provide and beſtow a competent Portion of the Things of this World. If we value and ſeek moſt the Things of this World, we may through God's diſpleaſure miſs of them: For his over-ruling Providence diſpoſes of all things, and he can fruſtrate all our Deſigns, if we diſpleaſe him, and make us low, and poor, and mean, notwithſtanding all our Endeavours to be otherwiſe; and diſpleaſe him we certainly do, if we do not eſteem and ſeek Him and his Love before all other things. But, if we do this, we ſhall become, as was ſaid before, the peculiar Favourites of his Love. And if for this he will be our God, it may be certainly concluded, that we ſhall not want any of his Creatures: If he will give the greater, he will not with-hold the leſs; he will not let ſuch Perſons want any manner of thing that is good for them. And this indeed is what our Saviour has expreſly promiſed, *Mat.* 6. 33. *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* By *theſe things* he means thoſe he had been ſpeaking of before, not the ſuperfluous Riches of this World; not the great Dignities and Honours of it, which

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things are but an uſeleſs Burden, and not at all neceſſary to our Happineſs; but Meat, and Drink, and Cloathing, and the neceſſary Accommodations of this preſent Life. Theſe things the Care of Providence will certainly provide for us, if we love God with all our Heart, and live according to a high eſteem and value for his Favour and Love. And thus we may ſee, that to mind and prefer the *things above*, is the ſureſt and the ſhorteſt way to Happineſs, both in this Life and the next; and more than this, I hope need not be ſaid to move us to it.

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PRAYER.

O Moſt bleſſed and glorious God, the only perfect, and all-ſufficient Being! Thou art, O Lord, thine own Infinite and Eternal Happineſs, and thou giveſt being and happineſs to all thy Creatures; thy infinite Goodneſs delights in our well-fare; and thou hateſt nothing that thou haſt made. We adore thee, O Lord, we bleſs thee, we praiſe thee, we magnifie thee, we give thee thanks for thy great and glorious Goodneſs, and for the bounteous Exerciſes of it to the Sons of Men. We thank thee that thou haſt given us ſuch a Being as we have, and haſt made us ſo capable of happineſs: That we have Bodies and Senſes ſuited to this very rich and plentiful World about us, and capable to take delight in the good things here, and for that the Earth is full of thy Goodneſs. But we praiſe thee yet more for the Spirit in Man, whereby we are capable of a rational and ſpiritual, and ſo a moſt Honourable and Angelical Delight in the Objects of our Senſes; that we can pleaſe our ſelves with their beauty, order, wonderful contrivance and ſubſerviency to each other, and that we are capable to ſee upon them the impreſſes and marks of thy glorious Wiſdom, of thy mighty Power, of thy infinite Fulneſs, of thy Majeſty and Glory. And we thank thee, O Lord, moſt of all, for that thou haſt been pleaſed to make us capable to know and meditate on thy Self; to chuſe and love thee, to deſire and enjoy thee, who art an Infinite, Eternal Good, and in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of Joy. Oh how ready ſhould our Hearts be at all times to ſay, Whom have we in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth that we can deſire beſides thee! But alas! we are degenerated, we are fallen from our

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Original Excellency, we are ſunk into Senſuality: we need to be put in mind and told wherein our true Happineſs lies, and to be excited, urged, and exhorted to purſue it: We hover here below, and ſeldom have any thoughts or deſires moving upwards; the objects of Senſe detain us with them, and we feed on Husks among Beaſts, we ſtay and abide upon the loweſt, and the ſmalleſt part of our Happineſs. Lord, we are miſerable, we are undone, and ſhall periſh for ever, if thy pity do not reſcue us from the Love of theſe low Things. Oh Pardon our guilty, and heal our diſtempered Souls. Diſcover thy ſelf to us, and make us love thee; ſhed abroad thy Love abundantly in our Hearts; Make us to riſe by the Creature to the Creator. Guide us by the ſtreams to thee the Fountain of their Goodneſs, and make us as we ought to love thee above all things. Let us be governed by thy Love in the whole courſe of our lives, and readily deny our ſelves to pleaſe thee and keep thy Commandments. Let us firmly believe the glorious Things which thou haſt prepared for them that love thee; and draw our Hearts after them to endeavour that our Treaſure may be in Heaven in Immutable things. And direct us, we pray thee, ſo to paſs through things Temporal, as that we finally loſe not the things Eternal.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon all Mankind. Let the Earth be filled with Knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the Sea; and all Men be directed and led in the way to true Happineſs. Give to all Nations Unity, Peace, and Concord. Pour down an abundant meaſure of thy Spirit upon thy Church, that the Goſpel may run and be glorified from the riſing of the Sun to the going down of the ſame. Let them proſper that love it, and let not the Gates of Hell ever prevail againſt it. We pray, eſpecially for that part of it which thou haſt graciouſly placed in theſe Nations, and hitherto wonderfully defended; Lord, make it a very fruitful Vineyard, and purge out of it all that is contrary to true Doctrin and Godlineſs. Bleſs, we pray thee, our Gracious King and Queen, and the Royal Family, with all Spiritual and Eternal Bleſſings; and give them long and happy Poſſeſſion of the Throne of theſe Kingdoms to thy Glory, and our Comfort. Bleſs all in Authority under them; help them

them truly, and indifferently to adminiſter Juſtice, to the puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, and to the maintainance of thy true Religion and Vertue. Give grace, O Heavenly Father, to all Biſhops and Curates, that they may both by their Life and Doctrin, honour thee, and guide thy People committed to them in the way of Bleſſedneſs. Let all the Subjects of this Realm be ſubject to thee in Loyalty and Subjection, and due Obedience to thoſe that are over them in Church and State; and let Piety, Love, Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Truth abound among us. We commend to thy Fatherly goodneſs all that are in any Diſtreſs and Affliction; all our Friends and Relations, we pray for our Enemies; do for all beyond what we are able to ask or think.

We humbly ask a comfortable and ſafe reſt this Night, and that it may pleaſe thee to make the out-goings of the Morning to rejoice. Let thy word which we have heard this Day guide our Converſations, and let us bring forth in them the Fruits of the Spirit; let not the Cares of this World, or the Deceitfulneſs of Riches choke the Word, and render it unfruitful; but grant we may live to the Glory of thy Name, and to the Peace and Salvation of our own Souls by Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe moſt comprehenſive words, we ſum up our Requeſts, ſaying,

OUR *Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.* Amen.

THE Necessity of Obedience TO THE COMMANDS of GOD, Proved and Stated.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mat. 7. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.

HOW common a thing is it, among those that have heard the glad Tidings of the Gospel, for Men to take up a presumptuous reliance upon the Merits of Jesus Christ, with neglect of Obedience to the Commands of God! Some

Some of the moſt profligate and careleſs Sinners will hope to be ſaved! And if one ask them how? They will ſay, by the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. Many indulge themſelves in their darling Sins, and yet hope to be ſaved by the Merits of Chriſt. And moſt certain it is, that the Doctrins of ſome Teachers give occaſion to this preſumption: They occaſion Men to think there is nothing neceſſary to their Salvation but ſtrong Believing, and ſo to endeavour nothing but that; and to rely upon the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, ſo as to neglect all Endeavour after any Righteouſneſs of their own: And this Error and Deluſion where it obtains, does often prove able to harden a Man againſt the moſt earneſt Exhortations to leave his Sins, yea, and even againſt the moſt plain Rebukes of Providence for them, and to fruſtrate all other Means of Grace, and Converſion whatever: It is therefore of great Importance to remove it out of the way, and this I ſhall endeavour by diſcourſing on theſe words of our Saviour, which, if they had been well conſidered together with many other plain Scriptures, it had prevented the entertainment of ſuch Imaginations in the Minds of Men.

He had been in a long Diſcourſe, enforcing many of the Commands of the Moral Law. And now towards the cloſe of this Diſcourſe, he begins in this *Verſe* to tell them of what importance and neceſſity it was to them to practiſe what he had taught. He plainly teaches, that no belief in him would avail them any thing, if they did not together with it keep the Commands of God. *Not every one* (ſays he) *that ſaith to me Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*,

that is, Not he that only believes I am the true Meſſiah, and the Redeemer of the World, not every one that pretends to rely upon me for Salvation ſhall be ſaved; *But he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* This is required to Salvation as well as the other: I come not to ſave Rebels continuing ſuch, but to ſave them who ſet themſelves to do my Father's Will, and to obey his Commands. And from henceforth to the end of his Sermon on the Mount, and to the end of this Chapter does our Saviour very evidently ſet himſelf to enforce, and urge the ſame thing.

The following Diſcourſe on this Subject, I ſhall divide into theſe 3 Parts.

1. I ſhall ſhew that it is neceſſary, and required even now under the Goſpel, that we ſet our ſelves to obey and keep the Commands of God.
2. I ſhall ſhew how far we are bound to do this.
3. I ſhall make ſome Application.

In the firſt place, I ſhall make it evident that it is neceſſary, and required of Chriſtians, that they ſet themſelves to keep the Commands of God. This is required of all thoſe who are grown Perſons, and are come to the exerciſe of their Reaſon; they who have opportunity to do this, muſt do it, and they cannot be ſaved without this by any Merits or Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. Indeed Infants baptized, and dying in their Infancy, may be ſaved by the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt, without the exerciſe and practice of good Works which they had not capacity or opportunity to perform; but grown Perſons cannot. Good works, or the keeping the Commands of God are neceſſary to our finding Favour, and

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to Salvation as Conditions required to precede and concur, tho they do not gain Favour and Salvation for us, as efficient or meritorious Cauſes. For proof of this, I ſhall, to make the Diſcourſe as ſhort as I can, only inſiſt upon two Arguments, omitting many other which might be produced to this purpoſe, and they that I ſhall inſiſt upon are theſe,

1. We ſhall find the Duties of the Moral Law frequently urg'd and enjoined to Chriſtians, by Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

2. So far is the Goſpel from excuſing our Obedience to the Laws of God, that it makes this the neceſſary Condition of our having an Intereſt in Jeſus Chriſt, or in the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace.

1. We ſhall find if we look fairly into the New Teſtament, that the Duties of the Moral Law are there very frequently urg'd, and enjoin'd to Chriſtians by our Lord, and his Apoſtles.

Our Lord himſelf ſays, *He came not to deſtroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them*, Mat. 5. 17. How can it then be a Doubt but that Chriſtians are obliged to keep the Laws of God, when our Saviour ſays, *He came not to deſtroy, but to fulfil them*? That is, He came not to take away the Force and Obligation of any, but to fulfil and obey them Himſelf, and to enforce the Obſervance of them by his Followers. His whole Sermon in the Mount, contained in the 5, 6, and 7th *Chapters* of *Matthew*, is made up of Moral Inſtructions; wherein he reſcues theſe from the corrupt Gloſſes and Interpretations of the *Phariſees*, and eſtabliſhes, and confirms the pure Precepts themſelves. Again, our Saviour

does enjoin at once the Obſervation of the whole Moral Law, as neceſſary to Salvation, under theſe two general Heads. The Love of God, and of our Neighbour. In *Luke* 10. it is ſaid, *Ver.* 25. *A certain Lawyer ſtood up and tempted him, ſaying, Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit Eternal Life?* Jeſus anſwers in the next *Verſe*, *What is written in the Law? How readeſt thou?* He anſwering, ſaid, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind; and thy Neighbour as thy Self.* Jeſus replies, in *Verſe* 28. *This do, and thou ſhalt live*: Intimating that he knew no other way to Life, that he could take, than by a diligent Endeavour, and Application of himſelf to the keeping of the Commands of God: That this was the way always appointed to the Jews, and that he came not to teach or procure a new way of Salvation; He therefore intimates, that he might learn in what was then written the way of Salvation, that is, in the Writings of the Old Teſtament. Jeſus Chriſt came not to alter the terms and way to Salvation, which had been appointed to all the World ſince the Fall of Man, but only to teach that way more perfectly.

Further; the Apoſtles alſo after Chriſt, and by the Direction of the Holy Ghoſt poured upon them, do urge and require the Obedience of Chriſtians to the Precepts of the Moral Law. Out of the many Inſtances which might be produced from every one of them to this purpoſe, I ſhall content my ſelf to take but one from the Writings of St. *Paul*, and another from the *Epiſtle* of St. *James*, to ſhew how well theſe two Apoſtles

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agree in this Matter, and to contract this head. The Apoſtle *Paul* in *Eph.* 6. 1. 23. ſays, *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right.* Honour thy Father and Mother (which is the Firſt Commandment with Promiſe) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayeſt live long on the Earth. We may ſee he preſſes there the ſame Duty which is enjoined in the 5th Commandment: And we may obſerve moreover, that he preſſes it as enjoin'd there. He quotes the 5th Commandment as an obliging Law, and a Rule ſtill in force: And herein he plainly allows, and eſtabliſhes the Force of all the Law that is Moral.

St. *James* alſo in the 2d. *Chap.* to his *Epiſt.* does enforce and urge the Obedience of Chriſtians to the Moral Law: Nothing leſs can be the meaning of the 8th *Ver.* If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*, Thou ſhalt do well: And in the following *Ver.* he further urges the Obedience to this general Precept; and ſays, *He that offends in one Point, is guilty of all*; and brings his Diſcourſe to this Point, That he who deſpiſes his poor Neighbour, and neglects works of Mercy, tranſgreſſes the Law, as well as he that ſhould kill, or commit Adultery; which things are alſo forbidden ſtill, as he there intimates.

Thus we ſee that Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles have unanimouſly urg'd the Chriſtian Church, to obſerve the Precepts of the Moral Law.

2. Another thing that proves the Neceſſity of Obedience, and a good Life under the Times of the Goſpel, is this: That even the Goſpel its ſelf makes this the neceſſary Condition of an Intereſt in Jeſus Chriſt. Good works indeed do not conſti-

tute a juſtified State; but they are neceſſary to the attaining it, as they are the neceſſary Conditions of our being juſtified by Chriſt.

We are certainly not admitted into the Covenant of Grace, without a ſincere Engagement to be the Lord's: Or without a ſolemn Vow and Promiſe to keep God's Holy Will and Commandments, and to walk in the ſame all the Days of our Lives. And our Church rightly teaches us the neceſſity of Obedience, in order to our being partakers of the Benefits purchaſed by Chriſt, by putting the ſolemn Promiſe and Reſolution of it into the Baptiſmal Covenant. But I ſhall make this evident from the Nature of that Faith which is requir'd, and from the Command of Repentance, and from ſome very direct Texts of Scripture.

1. This will appear to us, if we conſider the Nature of that Faith, which is required to make us partakers of the Benefits of the new Covenant. 'Tis ſaid indeed, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlaſting Life.* But we muſt let the Scripture tell us what it means by believing in him. To believe in Chriſt is to rely upon him for Salvation; but 'tis relying upon him upon ſuch Conditions as he appoints, and will admit of. And that Faith which will give us an Intereſt in him muſt purify our Hearts, and reſign our Wills, and make us deny our ſelves, and take up our Croſs, and follow him; which are things that he plainly requires of his Diſciples: And this Truth was taught in the Jewiſh Types and Shadows: The Altar indeed did ſanctify the Gift, yet every thing might not be offer'd upon the Altar; it was only permitted them to ſet thoſe things which were clean upon it, for an Offering to God. This

Faith

Faith is expreſt in Scripture by receiving Jeſus Chriſt; And this muſt needs mean the accepting and cloſing with him as he is offer'd to us in the Scriptures: That we receive him as a King, and ſubmit to his Laws, as a Teacher, and follow his Inſtructions, as well as that we receive him as a Prieſt, and rely upon the Merits of his Sacrifice. And even St. *Paul* himſelf does not ſay that any Faith will ſave a Man; but he defines the profitable and ſaving Faith to be that which works by Love, *Gal.* 5, 6. So that 'tis only Faith join'd with Obedience that can help us.

2. Again; This appears in that Repentance is required as neceſſary to our partaking in the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. St. *Peter* ſays to the *Jews*, who were made ſenſible of their Sin in Crucifying the Lord of Glory, that they muſt *repent, and be converted, that their Sins might be blotted out*, Acts 3. 19. And St. *John* preaches repentance as neceſſary to an Intereſt in Chriſt in 1 *Joh.* 1. 8, 9. where he ſays, *If we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive our ſelves, and the Truth is not in us; but if we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.* He makes forgiveneſs of Sin, and the Grace that delivers from the power and pollution of it to depend upon an humble and penitent Confeſſion of Sin. Now what is Repentance but a hearty Sorrow for Sin, and hatred of it for the Evil that is in it, and a reſolution and endeavour accordingly to forſake all that is ſinful and wicked? This then is abſolutely required of them that would have the Pardon of their Sins, and would find Favour with God through Jeſus Chriſt.

Thus

Thus we ſee it may be drawn by conſequence from ſome Scriptures, that our Obedience to the Commands of God, is the neceſſary Condition of Salvation by Chriſt.

3. In the laſt place I may make this evident by ſome direct and plain Texts of Scripture: And ſome of thoſe many, that do moſt plainly and directly ſay this, are theſe. In *Heb.* 5. 9. we are told Jeſus Chriſt is the Author of Salvation to them that obey him; Does not this plainly make the obeying him a neceſſary Condition of attaining Salvation by him? In our Text he expreſly ſays, None ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but ſuch as ſet themſelves to do the Will of God. And St. *Paul* himſelf, who is the great Preacher of Juſtification by Faith, ſays in plain Terms, 1 *Cor.* 7. 19. *Circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing, but the keeping the Commands of God.* I ſhall not need to add any more after that plain and full Scripture, 1 *Pet.* 1. 17. *If ye call on the Father, who without reſpect to Perſons judgeth every man according to his work, Paſs the time of your ſojourning here in Fear.* He there plainly tells us, that our Faith in God which is meant by calling on him, will not ſuffice us alone; that, without reſpect of Perſons, without favouring them upon any other account alone, he judges every man *according to his work.* He therefore urges us to paſs the time of our ſojourning here in Fear; that is, to take heed to our ways, to be careful of the performance of our Duty; for this is plainly the neceſſary condition of finding favour with him, if he will judge every man according to his works. That Faith in God which produces good works, or that Profeſſion of the true Religion

gion, which is accompanied with an holy Life, is the only Faith that will find Favour with God.

Thus I have ſufficiently ſpoken to the firſt Head, which was to ſhew, that it is neceſſary, and required even now under the Goſpel, that we ſet our ſelves to obey and keep the Commandments of God. I proceed now to ſpeak to the Second, which was,

To ſhew how far we are bound to this; what it is in particular, that the Goſpel, or Law of Grace does require of us in this Matter: This I think fit to ſpeak to, That I may not diſcourage any by ſeeming to impoſe an impoſſible Task, or trouble the Minds of thoſe that are tender; while I am endeavouring to awaken and excite others out of their neglect and preſumption. It is granted then, and muſt be granted, that we cannot in this Life perfectly keep the Commandments of God. *In many things we offend all*, ſays the Apoſtle, *Jam.* 3. 2. *And if we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive our ſelves, and the Truth is not in us*; as St. *John* tells us, 1 *Joh.* 1. 8. And our Saviour, in that Form of Prayer which he taught his Diſciples for their daily Uſe, has put in a Petition for the forgiveneſs of Sins; intimating therein, that we are likely to have as daily and conſtant occaſion to beg the remiſſion of our Sins, as we ſhall have to deſire our daily Bread; we ſhall want forgiveneſs through the weakneſs of Grace, as conſtantly as the weakneſs of Nature requires the ſupply of the Food. I muſt tell you then how far we are obliged indiſpenſibly to keep the Commands of God: This perfect and compleat Obedience, not being poſſible to us, it is perhaps, not proper to ſay, that it is indiſpenſibly required

red of us. But theſe things are required.

1. That there be in us a ſetled Purpoſe and Reſolution to keep the Commands of God; as far as we can do this, it muſt be the deliberate and ſetled Intention of every Soul. Like that of *David, I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments.* We muſt in our Judgments eſteem the Law of God to be in all things right and good; our Wills muſt chuſe it as ſuch, and we ſhould be poſſeſt with a hearty and ſincere Love of it: We muſt love his Law, and hate every falſe way. Every one muſt ſay to himſelf, This ſhall ſhall be the Guide and Rule of my Life: By this I will govern as far as I can, my Thoughts, and my Words, and my Actions. I will follow no common Cuſtoms or Faſhions; I will regard no wicked Maxims of the World; I will not cheriſh or allow any Inclinations contrary to this Rule. Nothing muſt be allowed or tolerated in our Hearts or Lives, but what is according to the Law of God.

2. From hence there muſt ſpring a conſtant Care and Endeavour to ceaſe from Evil, and do Good. *I will take heed to my ways* (ſays *David*) *that I offend not.* And it cannot be that a man can ſincerely deſire, and purpoſe to keep the Commands of God, and yet not diligently endeavour this. We muſt then exerciſe a conſtant Watchfulneſs and Obſervance over our Hearts and Ways. We muſt be willing to know our Duty, be ready to be convinced of it: We muſt endeavour to know it in the uſe of all fit means. We muſt endeavour to do well, and mind the keeping up our good Reſolutions; we muſt ſtrive againſt the perverſeneſs, and backwardneſs of our Nature to do

good;

good; ſilence and deſpiſe all Excuſes, and watch for, and lay hold of all opportunities of well-doing in any kind. In like manner we muſt conſtantly endeavour to abſtain from doing evil. We muſt avoid Temptations as much as we can, and reſiſt ſuch as we cannot avoid. The Scripture ſays, Reſiſt the Devil, and he will fly from you. We muſt endeavour to mortify, and weaken, and ſubdue all corrupt, and evil Inclinations that are in us. Theſe things are meant, when we are bid to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling; *And to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate.* This then muſt be the grand Care and Concern of our whole Lives, that which we do chiefly mind, and that which muſt direct and influence every other Concern, namely, the keeping of the Commands of God.

3. We muſt for the moſt part actually perform our Purpoſe and Reſolution; and live according to the Commands of God; and we muſt always abſtain from any wilful Violations of them in groſs and ſcandalous Sins. Certainly, he may not be denominated a good Man, that is not in the greater part good, and that does not moſt commonly perform the Duties God requires of him in his Place and Station. Therefore we muſt not live in the conſtant and habitual practice of any known Sin; or of ſuch an one as we might know to be a Sin. The good Man will not allow, not excuſe himſelf in any the leaſt Sin: He may be ſurpriſed and drawn ſometimes into that which is evil; but he will not run into it; and then there is nothing ill that ſhall be his conſtant Courſe; for if he be ſurpriſed into a Sin, he will not ſtay in it, as we may ſay, he ſeverely rebukes

bukes himſelf for it; he earneſtly repents, and ſets himſelf to renew his Reſolutions, and care to abſtain from it for the future. And then beſides, all groſs and high acts and degrees of Wickedneſs muſt be totally forſaken; as we may learn from what the Apoſtle very plainly ſays, in *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt* (ſays he) *which are Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like: Of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in times paſt, That they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Such things ſhew a Man to be out of a State of Grace and Salvation; they cut him off from all right to the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace: He that commits ſuch Enormities, is a Sinner; and his Repentance, and recovery to a good Condition, is not well aſſured till he he has for ſome time heartily grieved for ſuch Sin, and liv'd at a great diſtance from it, and practiſed even againſt Temptations and Provocations, the contrary Vertues. Theſe things are abſolutely and indiſpenſibly required. And if we do thus, God will look mercifully upon our Infirmities; he will accept our Obedience, tho it be imperfect, and we ſhall be juſtified by him, upon the Account of the moſt perfect and compleat Righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, tho we cannot work out ſuch an one of our own.

Application. It remains now that I cloſe up the Diſcourſe with a brief Application of what has been ſaid.

1. And in the firſt Place, we may from hence juſtify the frequent Preaching up of Vertue and Holineſs. The too common corruption and wickedneſs of Men's Lives, do greatly require ſuch Diſcourſes, and the Goſpel allows them. Shall we not urge and inſiſt upon thoſe things which are neceſſary to Salvation? Upon thoſe things which Chriſt himſelf and his Apoſtles much inſiſted upon, and made them the aim and ſcope of all their Preachings and Writings? Indeed without the frequent and earneſt inſiſting upon the neceſſity of a Holy Life, the corrupted Nature of Man is mightily apt to abuſe the pleaſant Doctrins of the Goſpel; when we hear of a ſure Attonement for Sin, we are apt to be leſs careful to avoid Sin, than we ought to be. It is certainly neceſſary, and very fitting to tell Men they have nothing to do with the Beneſits and Priviledges purchaſed by Chriſt, till they are obedient to his Laws, ſince this is very true; and it were to betray their Souls into Perdition, to be often telling what Chriſt has done for Mankind, and ſeldom to inſiſt upon what he requires of them: Such would by no means deſerve the Name of the moſt edifying Preaching; ſuch might indeed build Men up in a preſumptuous Faith, but not in the Holy Faith that is Saving. And if the Goſpel its ſelf doth require Men's Obedience to the Laws of God, then the urging of this is true Goſpel-Preaching; it is not obſolete, legal Preaching, nor is it dry, mean, Moral Preaching: It is ſuch Goſpel-Preaching as Chriſt Himſelf, and his Apoſtles employed themſelves in. To this Truth we have the Teſtimony of one of the greateſt Lights of the Church, ſince the Days of Inſpiration; and

he

he a Zealous Advocate for Free Grace, and all the glory of it, I mean St. *Auſtin.* This is to preach the Goſpel of Chriſt (ſays he) *Evangelizare Chriſtum.* Not only to ſay what things are to be believed concerning Chriſt; but alſo what things are to be obſerved and done, by him that comes to join or incorporate himſelf into the Body of Chriſt. And in ſpeaking of the things that are to be believed concerning Chriſt; It is not enough (ſays he) to ſay whoſe Son he was; whence he came according to his Divinity; and whence according to his Humanity; what things he ſuffer'd, and why; what is the Vertue of his Reſurrection; what Gifts of the Spirit he promiſed, and gave to the Faithful; But it ſhould alſo be taught what ſort of Men the Members muſt be, to whom he may, and will be the Head: What ſort he requires, and makes, and loves, and redeems, and brings to everlaſting Life. When theſe things are inſiſted upon (ſays he) then Chriſt is preached, *Chriſtus Evangelizatur* (*Aug. de Fide & Operibus. Tom.* 4.) This Preaching then does not take men off from relying upon Chriſt, it does not tend to make them depend upon themſelves for Salvation; but it ſhews them in what way they muſt rely upon Chriſt for Salvation, that they may certainly ſucceed in the doing it.

2. To improve yet a little further what has been ſaid: we may thence learn the Vanity and Deceitfulneſs of their hopes of Salvation, who lead wicked and ungodly Lives: they that live in their Sins, and yet hope to be ſaved, expect to come to Heaven by the way to Hell: they depend upon the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Chriſt without taking the only courſe to have an Intereſt in them.

3. There

3. There is not only folly and deceit in theſe Hopes; but alſo there is great guilt and provocation in them. For this is to turn the Grace of God into Wantonneſs, which is that St. *Jude*, *Ver.* 4. earneſtly condemns, when we encourage our ſelves in Sin from the undertaking of the Redeemer: What is ſaid of him in the Goſpel, is an encouragement for Men to forſake their Sins; but not to continue in them. This is the greateſt abuſe that can be of redeeming Love; it is contrary to the end and deſign of it. The Mediator took the Name *Jeſus*, *to ſignify* that his purpoſe is to *ſave his People from their Sins.* And indeed his deſign had been a very ſtrange one, if he had come to procure a Diſpenſation for our Love of infinite Goodneſs, for our Reverence of an infinite Majeſty, and of our Obedience to the Creator of all things; if he had come to diſpenſe with the Laws of Equity and Juſtice, of Mercy and Charity, of Truth and Faithfulneſs towards our Neighbour; This is a deſign unworthy of the Holy Jeſus, this had not been to glorify the Father; and how can it be but highly diſpleaſing to impute to him ſuch a Deſign, as this Opinion and Practice muſt be reckon'd to do? And yet further. This is contrary to the *Obligation* of redeeming Love, as well as to the *Deſign* of it, and muſt needs be upon that account very diſpleaſing. It was the greateſt Inſtance of divine Love to give his Only begotten Son to Die for us, and then it is the greateſt Obligation to the Love of God; And is it not a moſt enormous and unjuſt requital to make this an encouragement to the living in hatred againſt him? To live in conſtant rebellion and contempt? This muſt needs give the

higheſt and moſt guilty Aggravation to the Sins of Men that can be. Let us conſider then how much we are obliged by the Love of God to love him; and that *if we love him we muſt keep his Commandments.*

The PRAYER.

OH moſt merciful and gracious God; thy mercy is everlaſting, and thy truth endures from Generation to Generation. Thou haſt helped us in our low Eſtate through the greatneſs of thy Mercy: When we had rendred our ſelves deſerving of everlaſting Miſery, and utter Rejection from thy favour and care, thou didſt then take care for us, and laidſt help upon One that is mighty, and able to ſave to the uttermoſt: Oh who can conceive, or expreſs the Love of God to us in Chriſt Jeſus! It paſſes knowledge. We give thee, O Lord, moſt humble and hearty Thanks for this thy unſpeakable Gift. We thank thee for our Saviour's excellent Doctrins and Inſtructions, whereby he ſhews us the way to happineſs; for his moſt holy and good Life, whereby he leads us in the way to it, and is become an encouraging Pattern and Example of Well-doing; We bleſs thee for his meritorious Death, whereby he has made an Attonement for our Sins, has purchaſed for us thy ſanctifying Grace, and thy infinite, eternal Favour. Oh what reaſon have we to ſay, what ſhall we render unto the Lord for all his Benefits! How many ways, O Lord, haſt thou deſerved our higheſt praiſes, our ſupream Affections, and our beſt Obedience? But, Oh how unſenſible have we, ungrateful wretches, been of this thy great Mercy? How backward and ſlow to comply with the juſt and reaſonable Terms of Salvation? We are loth to part with our Sins, even for the Love of Jeſus, or to wean our Affections from this World, for the hopes of Heaven. Yea, we are apt to fall into the guilty and pernicious folly of turning the Grace of God into wantonneſs, of encouraging our ſelves to continue in our Sins, upon preſumption on thy

Mercy

Mercy in Chriſt Jeſus, and of expecting Salvation by him while we have neglected the terms and conditions of obtaining it. O Lord, awaken us at length to a due and wiſe Care of our own Souls: Of thy infinite Mercy, pardon our paſt Neglects, and give us, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, what thou requireſt, that we may be partakers of the great Salvation. Give us an unfeigned Repentance for all our paſt Tranſgreſſions; ſtedfaſt and ſincere purpoſes of new Obedience. Give us an humble, lively Faith in him, ſuch as may engage us to follow him, make us love and chuſe his Commands, ready to deny our ſelves for his ſake, and to devote our ſelves entirely to him, to live to him that died for us; let it bring forth much fruit in a diligent and induſtrious Obedience, and ſeek, and expect our acceptance and reward, only by Vertue of his Merits and ſpotleſs Righteouſneſs. Let ſuch a Faith, we pray thee, be formed or promoted in us by the Ordinances we have this day enjoyed. Let us lie down in peace with thee this Night, and repoſe our ſelves under the protection of thy Providence. If it pleaſe thee, that we ſhall awake again in this World, let our Hearts be full of a thankful Senſe of thy Mercies, and a Concern to ſhew forth thy Praiſe in the Courſe of our Lives.

We humbly recommend to thy Mercy and Favour all Mankind; beſeeching thee to enlighten thoſe that ſit in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of Death; to bring into the way of thy Truth, all ſuch as have erred, and are deceived: To repleniſh thy Church abundantly with the Gifts and Graces of thy good Spirit; to comfort and relieve any of thy Servants, that are deſolate and afflicted; to proſper thoſe that ſeek the Peace of thy Jeruſalem. We implore thy Mercy upon the Land of our Nativity: Lord, let Peace and Righteouſneſs, Charity and Piety, ſettle and abound among us. Rule and guide thou our Rulers in thy Fear: Teach our Teachers: Bleſs, comfort, and encourage thy Miniſters, both in Church and State, with a Loyal, Obedient, Peaceable, and Loving People. Grant that we may all live to thy Glory through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. In whoſe own words we further ſay.

Our Father, &c.

THE GREAT DUTY OF THANKFULNESS, Urged and Directed.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

1 Theſ. 5. 18.

In every thing give Thanks: ——

THere is an exceeding great evil and diſorder, which we may too frequently obſerve in the World, and which every Man's reaſon condemns in others, and yet all are apt to be often guilty of it themſelves: It is, that we we do commonly remember long, and retain a very deep reſentment of an Injury, whether it be a real, or but an imagined one; but we ſoon forget the Benefits we receive, and loſe the Impreſſions of them. Thus do Mankind often deal with one another, and thus alſo do they behave themſelves towards God. Tho he cannot wrong or injure us, yet we are apt to think he does ſo, when he does in any thing diſpleaſe us, and we behave our ſelves towards him, as if he did: We murmur againſt him, and grow diſcontented and froward,

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are ready to think 'tis in vain to ſerve him, and to throw off our Duty. And on the other ſide, we do at the ſame time forget his Benefits, and take no notice of what we have, many times, through deſire of what we *want*. We are very earneſt and importunate in our Requeſts for what we would have, and are cold in our Thankſgivings, or neglect to be thankful at all, when we have obtain'd it. The Spirit of God, taking notice of this Fault in Mankind, repeats his Inſtructions in Holy Scripture to the contrary. He bids us take care to join with all our Prayers, Thankſgivings, in *Phil.* 4. 6. he ſays, by the Apoſtle, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your requeſt be made known to God:* However deſirous ye are, however ſollicitous to obtain what ye want, of God, be ſure to be thankful for what ye have. Again, in this *Chapter* where our preſent Text is, he joins the Command of Thankſgiving with that of Prayer; the 17th *Ver.* bids us *Pray without ceaſing*, and this 18th ſays, *In every thing give Thanks*; whatever your condition be, recommend it to Almighty God by Prayer; and how long ſoever it pleaſes God to deny or delay what you deſire, yet continue to pray: And with your Prayers, remember alſo to give Thanks. *In every thing give Thanks*, that is, in every State and Condition, endeavour to retain always a Senſe of the Divine Benefits, to praiſe him for what he has done for you; and be free from all hard Thoughts of God, and undecent Murmurings againſt him. I confeſs this Command in this place ſeems to be chiefly directed to thoſe Holy and good Men, who are the peculiar Favourites of Heaven by the In-

tereſt of Jeſus Chriſt. But, becauſe this Duty is urged more generally elſewhere, and there is no Duty requir'd of ſuch good Men, but it is alſo required of all Men, at leaſt by conſequence, and as all Men are required to be good; I ſhall therefore take the words as exhorting to an univerſal Duty: And I conclude from them, that all Men are bound to expreſs a thankful Acknowledgement unto God of the Benefits they receive from him; and that in all Eſtates and Circumſtances whatſoever.

In diſcourſing upon this Matter, I ſhall endeavour theſe 2 things.

1. To prove that every Man has Reaſon for great Thankfulneſs to Almighty God.

2. To direct the right Expreſſions and Declarations of our Thankfulneſs.

In the firſt place, I ſhall endeavour to make it evident, That every Man has ſome reaſon to be thankful to God; ſome reaſon to praiſe and love him, and to be patient and contented in every Condition. And this, I think will evidently appear upon the making good the following Particulars.

1. Let us conſider, That all Men are in ſome meaſure Partakers of the Divine Benefits. There is not one among the Race of Mankind, that can juſtly reckon himſelf not at all obliged to God. Every man is beholden to God for his Being; for the preſervation and continuance of his Being ſo long as he ſubſiſts, and for ſome things that comfort him in his Being; and without doubt the Death of Chriſt is in ſome ſenſe an univerſal Benefit.

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Every Man is beholden to God for that Being which he has: *It is God that hath made us, and not we our ſelves.* And from that ſort of Being, which God has given us are we engaged to be thankful. We were made but little lower than the Angels, and crowned with Honour and Dignity, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſays of all Men, *Pſal.* 8. The meaneſt Man is next in Dignity to them in the Order of the Creation. It is an exceeding Honour of our Bodies, and their greateſt Worth and Commendation, that they are made fit to ſerve and entertain ſo noble a Gueſt as an immortal Spirit; and this Honour the moſt deformed, the weakeſt, and the moſt crazy Body has belonging to it. But our greateſt Worth and Dignity lies in the Soul which God has given us. There is in every Man an excellent Spirit, which is capable of very great things; however it is in ſome Men wretchedly neglected and depreſt. By this are all Men capable of the ſublime Knowledge of the Creatour, capable to love, and praiſe, and delight themſelves in him; by ſuch a Being then we are capable of Happineſs to a great and excellent Degree, and even of the higheſt kind of Happineſs that can be; as we can enjoy or delight our ſelves in him, who is the higheſt Good. And our immortal Soul renders us capable of Everlaſting Happineſs in the Eternal fruition of an Infinite, Eternal Good. Every Man may reach this Happineſs, if he will; This is that he was made and deſigned for, and no Man ſhall fall ſhort of it, but by his own default. Thus our Being then ſhould engage us to be thankful to God that gave it.

Further; 'Tis to him we owe the continuance of our Being; he ſupports and maintains us in this Life while it laſts, and after it in the other. This is a continual Obligation to Thankfulneſs, it is a continual Creation. As no Being can make its ſelf, ſo none can preſerve or continue its ſelf at all; but all things have always a moſt neceſſary dependance upon the great Creatour. We ought then all of us to acknowledge, it is he that holds our Soul in Life. And while he continues this Life, he obliges us in that we are ſo long capable in ſome meaſure to ſee and enjoy the pleaſant and good things of this World. If we have good and vertuous Souls, and are free from Envy and Malice, we can ſee with ſatisfaction and pleaſure, the Happineſs and ſatisfaction of others, tho we are not ſo happy our ſelves; eſpecially may this pleaſe us in thoſe that are vertuous and good, and in thoſe that are dear to us Beſides, while a Man lives, tho it be in an afflicted State, he has that important term and ſpace lengthened to him whereinalone he can make his peace with God, and fit and prepare his Soul for Heaven. The time of this Life is the only ſpace allowed us for the ſeeking and ſerving the Intereſt of Eternity. And if our Life be continued, tho in the midſt of continual or ſucceeding vexations and miſeries; as theſe give us opportunity of exerciſing long Patience, an invincible Truſt in God, the moſt commendable love to him, and the moſt difficult reſignation and ſubmiſſion; ſo we have herein opportunity to gain the greater applauſe hereafter, the brighter Crown of Glory, and the more excellent degrees of reward, by a *patient continuance in well-doing*. We have reaſon then to be thankful for the continuance of our Being, even in ſuch a State as this. Fur-

Further; There is no Man but does enjoy at one time or other, and in a greater or leſs meaſure the comforts of this preſent Life. Thoſe things which do for the time elevate and chear him, and make him joyful and merry. Every man has ſome intervals of bright and calm Weather; no one's day is always clouded and ſtormy: This Life is to none a State of pure miſery. We are born to trouble in this World, yet none do meet with only trouble and affliction. Beſides, there is commonly a mixture of Good and Evil in every Condition: Every inconvenient State has ſome conveniencies to allay it. Theſe we may find out if we will impartially conſider our Circumſtances; And from thence we ſhall always have ſome reaſon to be thankful.

Laſtly, The Death of Chriſt is without doubt in ſome ſenſe an univerſal Benefit. *Jeſus Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners*: He by his one Oblation of himſelf once offer'd, has made a full, perfect, and ſufficient Sacrifice, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. He has by his Death brought it to paſs, that every Man upon his Repentance and Faith in him, may be ſaved; that Salvation may be offer'd to all; therefore he bid his Diſciples go and preach the Goſpel to all: And this Salvation may be obtained by all, to whom it is offer'd, if they are not wanting to themſelves: None of them periſh, but by their own perverſneſs. All in the Chriſtian Church are beholden for the Knowledge of God, and Chriſt which is offer'd to them; for the Means of Grace and Salvation. Thus it appears that all Men are in ſome meaſure Partakers of the Divine Benefits.

2. *Another* thing that makes this an univerſal *Duty* is,

is, that God has with ſuch admirable Wiſdom diſtributed his Gifts among Men, that every one almoſt has in ſome reſpects or other the Advantage of ſome other Men. As none are, in this Life perfectly miſerable, ſo we can ſee none that are perfectly and compleatly happy. No man ſhall have good reaſon to think himſelf worſe dealt with, and harder uſed by God's Providence, than all Men beſides him. There is hardly a Man but may ſay, If I want what others have, I may alſo ſee ſome at leaſt of others wanting what I have, and what I delight in, what I would not be without, and perhaps would not exchange with many for theirs. If the Rich have greater Dainties, the Poor have uſually the ſtronger and better Appetites: The Labourer has greater ſtrength, and more health many times than he that lives at eaſe. If one Man has leſs Honour than another, he has leſs care and trouble too; an obſcure Station is bleſt with greater ſafety, is expoſed to leſs Envy than the contrary. How many Cares and Griefs and Fears do attend Riches and Greatneſs, of which the mean, and poor Man may ſay, I have none of theſe to trouble me. It pleaſes God many times to lodge a vertuous and brave Soul in a deformed and contemptible Body, and oftentimes are great Beauty, or Strength, and great Folly joined together. It was very fitly replied by the Philoſopher, who being pitied by one for the Loſs of a Farm, anſwer'd his Condoler thus, You have but one Field, and I have yet three left, and why ſhould not I then rather pity and grieve for you? If our mind is apt to grow ſick with Envy, or diſcontent at ſeeing the advantages in ſome reſpects which others have of us, we ſhould cure them a-

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gain by reflecting on thoſe which in other reſpects perhaps we may have of them, or of ſome other Perſons. And thus may every man ſee ſomething in his Condition to be thankful for, upon a fair compariſon of it with that of other Men.

3. It is yet another ground of Thankfulneſs common to all Men; That the Gifts which we receive from God, are undeſervedly and freely beſtowed upon us. As he is the Sole Fountain of all the good we enjoy; ſo he is the abſolute, and free Diſpenſer of all his Gifts: *God is a Debtor to no man.* We cannot draw any of his Bleſſings from him by previous Merit. It was the meer and free Goodneſs of God, which mov'd him to give us our Being; Certainly before we were, we could not oblige him; All our Faculties and Powers then are free Gifts, and render us indebted, and obliged to him. Therefore no exerciſe of theſe in any ſervice of him, can merit any thing from him; for in all we do, we only pay our own Debt; if indeed we could do ſo much as that. Well might the Apoſtle make that Challenge, *Who hath given any thing to God, and it ſhall be recompenced to him again?* Rom. 11. 5. He can receive no advantage from his Creatures, and therefore he deſigns none to himſelf in what he beſtows upon them. He may then very juſtly expoſtulate with our murmuring and diſcontent, as the Houſholder in the Parable, Friend, I do thee no wrong. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? We ſhould always conſider he is at liberty whether he will give what we ask of him or not. What we want is his, and what we have is ſo too, even whilſt we have it; and ſo he is at liberty alſo to take that away. We are entirely beholden

beholden to him for all that we have; And ſhould not this make us always thankful? He deſerves this from us, if he gives and continues any thing to us, ſince he does this freely. Since God is kind, Let us be aſhamed to be unjuſt; ſince he gives us the good Things, which we do not deſerve from him, Let us not be ſo guilty as to deny him the Praiſe and Thankſgiving, which he does deſerve from us. Should we not thank him for thoſe things which we cannot demand of him, which he gives, and needs not give us? Tho we have not all that we deſire, yet ſince what we have is more than we deſerve, we ought ſure to be very thankful for this.

4. Another ground of thankfulneſs common to all Men is, there is none of us but have forfeited all the Mercies which God has ever beſtowed upon us. It is true, that before we had a Being, we could not deſerve not to be made; we could not offend God, nor provoke him to deny us our Being; for that which is not, can do nothing: But it may be conſider'd, that he who made us, knew before with what perverſeneſs, and rebellion, and ingratitude we would uſe the Beings he ſhould give us: He fore-ſaw all the Sins and Provocations of our Lives, and yet he brought us into Being; and has made us capable to be greatly Happy, tho he knew we would deſerve to be miſerable. And ſince we came to an ability of exerciſing the Powers he has given us; we have not only laid no Obligations upon him to do us good, but have alſo deſerved the contrary. We are all Sinners, and fall ſhort of the Glory of God; we have not anſwered the End of our Being, and ſo have render'd our ſelves utterly unworthy of all his Mercies. We brought into the World with

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us at our Birth a ſinful Nature, poſſeſt with Enmity againſt God, diſpoſed to rebel, and ſuch as did deſerve to be cruſht in its Infancy. He has, notwithſtanding that, nouriſht and brought us up, and we, notwithſtanding his Favour have rebelled againſt him. He took us into the tender Arms of his Providence, when we firſt came into the World, when he might have thrown us immediately into Hell, as guilty in our firſt Parents: He ſuffered us to be admitted into his Church, and waſh'd away that Guilt in the Laver of Baptiſm. Let us conſider how ill we have requited this Kindneſs: How much we have forgotten him, in whom we live, move, and have our Being: How we have broke his juſt and good Laws, deſpiſed to be like him in Holineſs, wilfully polluted our ſelves with Sin, affronted his rightful Sovereignty over us, abuſed his free Gifts, and diſhonoured him with what we ought to have uſed to his Glory: I ſay, let us conſider theſe things, and wonder that he does any thing for us, rather than murmur at any time that he does no more. Let us never think our ſelves hardly dealt with, while we enjoy any thing that is good, ſince we deſerve none, ſince we have actually forfeited all. And thus, I ſuppoſe it appears, Every Man has Reaſon for the Practice of this Duty: It is incumbent upon all to be contented and eaſy under God's Diſpenſation, and to be thankful for the meaſure of good that they have; not only is this due from the rich and proſperous, but alſo, even from the poor and afflicted.

I proceed now to the Second Part of the Diſcourſe, which is to direct to the right Expreſſions and Declarations of our thankfulneſs to God for

for his Benefits. And this (we muſt know) is not fully performed in a ſhort Ejaculation now and then lifted up to God: But the Heart that is truly and habitually thankful, will conſtantly endeavour, and for the moſt part perform all that is contained in the following Particulars.

1. We muſt take notice of, and own the Divine Benefits. We muſt acknowledge God's continual care of us, and kindneſs to us: Own it was he that made us to differ in all the advantages that we have above others. When a Man proſpers in the World, he muſt not aſcribe his Proſperity to his own Induſtry or Skill, nor to a blind Chance; but always to the Providence of God, and be ready to ſay, 'Tis he gives him all things. We muſt obſerve and value the Divine Benefits, it is great unthankfulneſs to deſpiſe them; we muſt take heed that we do not ſo regard and magnify our wants, as to over-look our Mercies, and to think that we are not beholden to God. We muſt receive his Favours and Obligations as ſuch, reckon our ſelves beholden to him for what he gives us. We muſt preſerve a freſh and lively remembrance of God's Mercies and Deliverances; as *David* charges himſelf to do, *Pſal.* 103. 2. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* Thus our Mind and Thoughts are to be employed about theſe.

2. We muſt praiſe him for his Mercies in ſolemn and devout Thankſgivings. In theſe we muſt expreſs by words the former inward Senſe of his Benefits, and ſo be thankful in Heart, and in our words. Say to him, as *David*, *Pſal.* 30. *I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou haſt lifted me up, and haſt*

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not made mine Enemies to rejoice over me; when at any time he has delivered us from Enemies, ſay, *O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou haſt healed me, and brought up my Soul from the Grave, thou haſt kept me alive from going into the Pit*, when he has deliver'd from Sickneſs. Say, for daily Mercies, *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to ſing praiſes unto thy Name, O moſt high: To ſhew forth thy loving kindneſs in the morning, and thy faithfulneſs every night*; as in *Pſal.* 92. 1, 2. The Book of *Pſalms*, as it was the Exerciſe of extraordinary and inſpir'd Devotion, is an excellent Repoſitory of the beſt Expreſſions of all ſorts for the exerciſe of our Devotion by: Out of which, we ſhall do well to furniſh our ſelves with the wiſe and acceptable forms of Thankſgiving, which are therein for the better performance of this Duty.

3. We muſt expreſs our Thankfulneſs in Deeds, as well as in Thought and Word: And this muſt take in an univerſal Obedience to his Commands; we ought to charge our ſelves with this Task, and conſtantly endeavour to perform it through the whole courſe of our Lives. Nothing can be more abſurd, than for an habitual Sinner to pretend to any gratitude towards God: Is he to be reckoned thankful, who affronts him continually? who lives in thoſe Practices, which he knows are moſt ungrateful and diſpleaſing to him? Is this the right way of acknowledging a Benefactor, to do him all the Injury that we can? Let us then ſtudy and learn his Laws, that we may know what will pleaſe him, and then apply our ſelves induſtriouſly to do it. And whatever we have and are, ſhould be all devoted to him,

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and employed as far as it is capable to be to the ſerving of his Honour and Glory, 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do* (ſays the Apoſtle) *Do all to the Glory of God.* This is the juſt End of all his Gifts, and to ſerve that end, muſt needs be the expected way of our Thankſgiving for them.

And that end may be ſerved, and another Obligation anſwered too, and that when we employ, (as he requires we ſhould do) what he gives us, as much as we can to the good of Mankind. We muſt deſire and endeavour to be uſeful to others, not live to our ſelves alone: We muſt not be proud of our advantges, but ſerviceable with them. In *Heb.* 13. 15. *We are exhorted to offer the Sacrifice of Praiſe to God continually, that is, the fruit of our Lips, giving thanks to his Name:* But the Apoſtle immediately adds, *To do good and communicate, forget not; for with ſuch Sacrifice God is well-pleaſed:* He intimates the former is required and due; but we muſt not ſatisfy our ſelves with that alone, but he requires alſo another Sacrifice, even that of good Works, and offices of Charity. All the good that we have power and opportunity to do for our Neighbour, relating to his Soul or his Body, his Reputation or Eſtate, we muſt be ready charitably to perform; and this is to be always done in the beſt way to ſerve his Intereſt; we muſt not only regard our own Advantage. Thus ſhould all the ſeveral Callings, Offices and Dignities of Men be managed: And thus may all Men expreſs their Thankfulneſs to God for his benefits in the Buſineſs of their worldly Callings; thus they may conſecrate theſe, and make them religious.

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Thus I have alſo finiſht the Second thing propos'd. Now to conclude, that we may the better excite our ſelves to theſe things, Let us further conſider at our leiſure.

The greatneſs of God to whom we are beholden, together with our own meanneſs. He that gives us all we have, is a Being infinite and perfect, he is eternally happy in the enjoyment of himſelf, has no need of any of his Creatures, nor can have any advantage from them: Yet has he taken care of us continually; he watches over us every moment, to defend us from miſchief, to ſupply our wants, to protect our enjoyments, and to ſupport our frail Lives. Juſtly may we ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou viſiteſt him?*

Let us aſſure our ſelves too, that the beſt way to preſerve the Benefits we enjoy, is, to uſe them rightly, and to be duly thankful for them.

Let us reckon alſo that this muſt needs be neceſſary to the acceptance and ſucceſs of our Prayers for ſuch things as we want, to uſe well, and be thankful for what we have already obtained.

Laſtly, Let us conſider that a thankful frame of Mind; ſuch as is ſenſible of God's Mercies, that which ſees its own advantages, and thinks upon the good things which it enjoys; That uſes them as God requires, with Wiſdom and Reaſon, and a good Conſcience; ſuch a one keeps the Soul always eaſy and calm, always chearful and contented; ſuch a Perſon fully enjoys what he has, and taſtes the ſweetneſs of it. Whereas he who murmurs and complains, who is never ſatisfied, nor contented, is always unhappy: He who pores only upon his wants, and what he de-

ſires, who is impatient under every affliction and croſs, and abuſes himſelf and his enjoyments in guilty exceſſes; ſuch a man can never feel any reſt or quiet in his Mind, he is always troubled and uneaſy: He imbitters his Pallate ſo, that he cannot rightly reliſh any good thing he has, is a burden to himſelf, and indeed does ſeverely puniſh upon himſelf his own Iniquity and Ingratitude. Lt us then *in every thing give thanks*, and ſay, *To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory, Thanks and Praiſe, for ever and ever.* Amen.

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PRAYER.

ALmighty and most Gracious God, thou art good, and doest good; thou art abundant in Goodness. We thine unworthy Servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving kindness, which thou hast graciously shewn to us, and to all Men. We bless thee for our Creation, O Lord; for that thou hast made us little lower than the Angels, and crowned us with honour and dignity; and for that thou hast plentifully furnisht this World with good things for our Use. We own, O Lord, with all thankfulness, that thou hast hitherto preserved us; thou hast taken care of us ever since we came from our Mothers Womb. Thou hast defended us from innumerable Evils, which always compass us about: Thou hast given us all that we have enjoy'd of the good things of this World, for they are thine, and thou dost dispose of them, as seemeth good to thee; and by thy Blessing upon thy Gifts have they been sufficient to support and comfort our mortal Life. But above all, we bless, we praise thee, we magnify thee for thy inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the hopes that we have of obtaining everlasting glory and happiness by the vertue of his Merits, and by the guidance of thy good Spirit. O Lord, give us, we beseech thee, a due and deep sense of all thy Mercies, make our Hearts unfeignedly thankful; make us ready to acknowledge, that we are less than the least of thy Mercies; that in all thou giveſt, thou owest us nothing: Make us humbly sensible and ashamed of all our transgressions against thee, of our base and ungrateful returns to thy Mercies; That instead of winning us to love and serve thee, they have encouraged us to transgress, and have been used in rebellion against thee. O Lord, of thy infinite Mercy, pardon all our past unthankfulness:

fulneſs: And let thy Grace make us ſet our ſelves for the future, to ſhew forth thy praiſe, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives; by giving up our ſelves to thy Service, and by walking before thee in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all our Days. O Lord, make us to go in the Path of thy Commandments. And from thy mercy and goodneſs, let us learn to ſhew mercy, and to do good according to our power and opportunity, communicating to the Neceſſities of others; which is a Sacrifice well-pleaſing unto thee. And do thou, O Lord, continue the exerciſes of thy goodneſs to us, till thou haſt made us perfectly and compleatly happy in the enjoyment of thy ſelf.

We humbly implore thy Mercy and Favour for all Mankind. Oh that thy way may be made known upon Earth, and thy ſaving Health among all Nations; that the People may praiſe thee, O God, yea, that all the People may praiſe thee. Bleſs, we pray thee, thy Church, and defend it from all Spiritual and Temporal Enemies. Remove out of it all falſe Doctrin, Hereſy and Schiſm, Envy, Hatred, Malice, and all Uncharitableneſs; hardneſs of Heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandments.

We intreat thee graciouſly to watch over that Part of it which thou haſt planted amongſt us; defend it from ſecret Attempts and Plots, and from open Violence, from all the Enemies of thy true Religion eſtabliſht among us, and make it, we pray thee, a glorious Church in the eminent Gifts and Vertues of the Members of it. Bleſs our King and Queen, and all that are put in Authority under them, with great Wiſdom and Underſtanding, with a Zeal for thy Glory, and the Subject's Welfare. Teach thoſe that are Subjects, each in their ſeveral Places, to do their own Buſineſs, and to ſtudy ſubmiſſion and quietneſs. We humbly recommend to thy Mercies, our Friends, Relations, and even our Enemies, and all that are in Adverſity. We render thee Thanks, O Lord, for all the Mercies of this Day in particular; but eſpecially for the Liberty of thy Houſe, and for the Means of Grace we have there enjoyed. Hear, O Lord, the Prayers we have offered to thee. Bleſs thy Word and Sacraments to us; whenever we enjoy them, let them be

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thy power to our Salvation. We humbly beg thy Protection for this Night and evermore, even unto thy Heavenly Kingdom, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour and Glory world without End.

OUR *Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever.* Amen.

THE
Pleaſantneſs of Religion,
Demonſtrated and Improved.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 3. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs. ---

THeſe words are ſpoken of *Wiſdom*, as you may ſee by *Verſe* 13. of this *Chapter*, where *Solomon* begins the Commendation of that: Saying, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding; The Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold; She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canſt deſire are not to be compared to her: Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour*; then he adds, *Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs.* And by *Wiſdom* (of which he ſays theſe great things) he means Religion, or the Wiſdom

Wiſdom of good and vertuous living; to which the Scripture it ſelf does elſewhere plainly give that Name, *Job* 28. 28. *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil, is Underſtanding.* The *Ways* of Wiſdom, then, means the Practice of Religion and Vertue: This he ſays, is very *pleaſant*: He has Joy and Pleaſure in abundance, who ſteadily lives in a religious and good courſe of Life.

This is the import and ſenſe of theſe Words. And if this be true, here is a very ſenſible and important inducement to a good Life contained in them. There is nothing uſually more powerful and attractive with Mankind, than Pleaſure; nothing which they more earneſtly, or more univerſally covet: If then it can be made appear, that there is a great deal of this even in well-doing; this may be a means to allure Men to the trial of it; and to divert them from thoſe courſes of Wickedneſs, which draw many into Everlaſting Perdition by the allurement of Pleaſure. To make this good, and to prove what *Solomon* here ſays, will be the chief buſineſs of this Diſcourſe.

And I do not doubt but it will be beyond any Man's Power to deny or queſtion this, who ſhall ſoberly conſider the following Particulars.

1. The Principle from whence all true and ſincere Religion proceeds and ſprings, is Love; and that muſt needs render it highly pleaſant in the Practice of it. This *muſt* be the Principle and Spring of true and ſincere Religion. All the Duties we perform towards God or Man, muſt proceed from Love to God and Man. This *muſt* be the Principle of our good Actions, and wherever true Love is, it *will* be a Principle of good A-

ctions. All the inſtances of Duty required of us are but ſuch things, as Love it ſelf will put us upon; ſuch as Love naturally ſuggeſts, and does incline to. He that truly loves God, cannot chuſe but ſeek what will pleaſe him, and endeavour to do all that; and he *muſt* endeavour to avoid whatever would offend God. He *muſt* delight to contemplate the Divine Perfections; to think upon the Object that he loves; to adore and worſhip God; to ſeek and promote the Love and Honour of him. So he that loves his Neighbour ſincerely, *muſt* delight in, and deſire the Welfare and Happineſs of Men; he *muſt* endeavour to promote it as much as he can; and will be far from wiſhing, or endeavouring any evil to any Man, or from delighting in what does happen to any. And this, now, is even a Demonſtration of the Pleaſantneſs of a Religious Life; that all of it is nothing elſe but the Exerciſe of Love. He that is driven to do his Duty by Fears and Terrors, performs indeed an ungrateful Task, and goes on in theſe ways with Reluctancy and Sorrow: But he that is drawn with the Cords of Love, follows with Joyfulneſs. He will run and not be weary, whom Love inſpires: He minds not, is not diſcouraged with any Ruggedneſs of the way; but is rather pleaſed with Difficulties, and put on, than troubled or retarded, becauſe they give him opportunity to expreſs the greater Love. This renders the Labours of Religion eaſy and even Sufferings delightful. *I take pleaſure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Neceſſities, in Perſecutions, in Diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake*, ſays a great Lover of Jeſus, 2 *Cor.* 12. 10. It was the ſtrength of Love in the Primitive Followers of Jeſus, which

which made them very laborious and diligent in Religion, and made them ſuffer much, even to the moſt cruel and tormenting Deaths, and do both with unſpeakable Joy and Pleaſure. They prov'd what a great Lover of God, ſaid long ago, *Cant.* 8. 6, 7. *Love is ſtrong as Death: Many waters cannot quench Love, neither the Floods drown it:* All the Task of Love is pleaſant, and nothing is counted hard or uneaſy which that enjoins us.

2. Another thing that renders the Practice of Piety and Vertue very pleaſant, and therefore proves it ſo, is, the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of all that which Religion enjoins us to do. It is moſt highly equitable, and juſt in all the parts of it; and is moſt perfectly what the Apoſtle calls it, *Rom.* 12. 1. namely, *Reaſonable Service.* There is nothing required of us within the whole compaſs of our Duty, but what a Man's own Mind and Reaſon upon ſerious conſideration, muſt needs be perfectly ſatisfied in; nothing that he can have any reaſon to be aſhamed of, or to think below him, or unfit for him to do, or that he can juſtly upbraid, or condemn himſelf for doing. How reaſonable and juſt are all the Duties of Piety towards God? This will appear upon a fair ſtating and propoſal of them. Is it not highly ſo, that we reverence and adore an infinitely glorious and excellent Being? That we truſt the Original Truth? That we love the Sovereign and the Fountain Good? That we obey the ſupream Authority of the World in all that he commands? That we reſign and ſubmit our ſelves entirely to his diſpoſing Providence, who is rightful Owner, and juſt Diſpoſer of all things?

That

That we praiſe and acknowledge thoſe glorious Perfections, which are daily exerciſed to our Comfort and Advantage, and give him Thanks for all the good things that we enjoy, ſince it is he that freely beſtows them? What can be more equitable, and more agreeing to right reaſon than theſe things? Again, That the things which are made to be our Duty in our carriage towards Men are all highly reaſonable and juſt, does ſufficiently appear, in that theſe two are the Fundamental Rules of that Duty: Namely, That we do to others, as we would they ſhould do unto us; and that we love our Neighbour as our ſelves. What can be more agreeing to reaſon, and more ſatisfactory to a Man's own Mind, than to give my Neighbour what, in his Circumſtances, I, my ſelf might deſire; or than to love him as my ſelf, who is my Fellow-Creature, and in all Points like my ſelf? How reaſonable is it for me to ſhew mercy, who need mercy? For me to be ready to do good, and perform all manner of kind Offices to my Neighbour; when I muſt needs deſire that others ſhould be ſo diſpoſed towards me? How ready ſhould I be to forgive, who muſt often need forgiveneſs? How reaſonable is it that I ſhould be honeſt and faithful to others, when I deſire them to be ſo towards me? A little ſober Conſideration would make it evidently appear, concerning every inſtance of Duty towards our Neighbour, that it is moſt highly reaſonable and juſt.

And when a Man apprehends and conſiders this thing, he will perform his Duty with an entire ſatisfaction; And it muſt pleaſe him to think, that in what he has done, he has paid a juſt

Debt

Debt to Almighty God, he has render'd what was due to him; to think he has acted as becomes his Reaſon, and ſo as he muſt needs be juſtified by the Wiſdom and Conſciences of his Neighbours, in his carriage towards them: He finds in himſelf what *David* ſaid, *Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect unto all thy Commands*; he ſees he has no reaſon to be aſhamed of his Actions, but they are ſuch as he can juſtify and applaud himſelf for; and certainly there can be nothing more pleaſant to a Man, than the juſt applauſes of himſelf.

3. The Dignity and Nobleneſs of good Actions does render it very pleaſant to do well, and therefore alſo proves that it is ſo. He that lives well, lives up to the higheſt and moſt noble capacities of his Nature. In pious and vertuous Actions alone, do we greatly excel the Beaſts that periſh; not in any ſenſual Pleaſures or Enjoyments. They have Senſes as well as we, and as many, and can delight in the Objects of them, and have, perhaps as many delights of that kind as we: But they cannot be pious or wiſe; they cannot be vertuous or good, becauſe they do not know or chuſe their own Actions. In theſe things the religious Man excels them, and advances himſelf truly above them, and he only among Men does in any conſiderable meaſure excel them.

Further, ſo far as we become Religious, we are already here on Earth become like the Angels which are in Heaven: He that lives religiouſly is employed as they are, and conforms himſelf to them; as our Saviour does plainly intimate, when he bids us pray, that the Will of God may be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven. The *Pſalmiſt*

miſt ſays of the Angels, *They perform the Commandments of God, they hearken to the voice of his word*, Pſal. 103. 20. The pious Man, then, that carefully performs his Duty towards God, joins himſelf to that noble Company, he is *a Fellow-Citizen of the Saints*, or holy Ones (which may mean the Angels) *And of the Houſhold of God*; as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Eph.* 2. 19. *I am thy Fellow-Servant*, ſaid an Angel to St. *John*, *And Fellow-Servant of the Prophets, and of them which keep the Sayings of this Book*, Rev. 22. 9. When we worſhip and praiſe God, we join with Angels and Arch-Angels, and all the Company of Heaven. When we pay him a profound Reverence, and come before him with a godly Fear, we do as they who are repreſented; as covering their Faces in their ſolemn Addreſſes to him. When we are concern'd, and endeavouring to promote his Glory in the World; this is what they conſtantly endeavour. When we combat the Temptations that aſſault our ſelves, and ſet our ſelves againſt the works of the Devil in others, we are on the ſame ſide with *Michael*, and his Angels, are join'd and taking part with thoſe bright Hoſts againſt the Devil and his Angels. And this ſurely, is greatly to our Honour.

And there is a further Dignity and Excellence in a good, and vertuous Life, and that is, it is conformity to the Ever-bleſſed God himſelf. And therefore when any are made righteous and holy, they are ſaid to be renewed after his Image and Likeneſs, *Eph.* 4. 24. When we beſt perform our Duties to Men, then we do beſt imitate, and moſt reſemble the moſt excellent and perfect Being. When we are merciful, 'tis as our

Father

Father in Heaven is merciful. When we return good for evil, 'tis to do like him who is good to the Unthankful and the Evil. When we are ſincere and true, juſt and righteous in all our behaviour; this is to reſemble him who is a God of Truth, and without Iniquity. When we patiently bear with the Infirmities of others; this is a noble imitation of his long-ſufferings with us all. When we forgive thoſe that injure us, this is as he does, who is a God forgiving Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin: When we ſet our ſelves to do all the Offices of kindneſs that we can, to be beneficial to Mankind in our ſeveral Stations; this is a very Honourable Imitation of his abundant Goodneſs. Upon theſe accounts a good and vertuous Life, is truly great and honourable and noble: This puts upon a Man the greateſt worth and value that he can attain to; this is his beſt accompliſhment; and as it raiſes him in the eſteem of God, ſo it renders him truly deſerving the reſpect and eſteem of Men, and is that which does beſt deſerve it. Hence it is ſaid, *The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour*, Prov. 12. 26.

Now though it were very unreaſonable that the Senſe of this ſhould make any Man Proud, and Diſdainful of his Neighbour, whom he thinks not to be ſo good as himſelf, when in all this, he has nothing but what he receiv'd, and it was the free Grace of God that made him to differ; and in becoming Proud, he ceaſes to be the good Man: Yet a thankful, humble Senſe of this a Man may have, and the Thoughts of it may afford him a great deal of Delight and Pleaſure. To think, the Creatour made the Humane Nature at firſt, but little lower than the Angels,

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and Crown'd it with Honour and Dignity: All of us indeed fell in our firſt Parents from that Honourable State, and our Nature being defil'd with Sin, we became more vile than the Beaſts that periſh: But I (Thanks be to Divine Grace) have recovered that State again in ſome meaſure; I am riſing towards the Perfection of that Dignity and Honour as I encreaſe in Vertue and Piety: I am now one of the Houſhold of God, one of the honour'd Train, and Followers of the glorified Jeſus. I am reckon'd a Member of that bright and happy Society above, by God and them.

4. Another thing that renders good Actions, and a religious Life very pleaſant, is the Thought of having pleas'd God therein. It is a very grateful and comfortable thing to have pleas'd and ſatisfied our ſelves in doing well; to have dignified and exalted our ſelves: But this is ſtill an additional Pleaſure to have pleaſed God too. When a Man can think, in this courſe which I hold, whoever is diſpleaſed with me, I pleaſe God. I pleaſe him whom I have moſt reaſon to pleaſe, and whom it will be my greateſt Advantage to pleaſe. I approve my ſelf to the wiſeſt Being; I approve my ſelf to God the Judge of all: And who is he that can condemn whom God juſtifies? It is a ſmall thing to me to be judg'd of Mens Judgment. He takes Delight in me, and is well pleaſed with my Actions, who can do whatſoever he will; who can make me as happy as I can deſire to be. I am through Jeſus Chriſt, accepted with the moſt Holy God. And it muſt be an unſpeakable Pleaſure to a good Man to think, while I am doing well, God beholds me, I am never out of his Eye; he beholds

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me with Delight and Complacence, he has always a particular and ſpecial regard to me. In whatever obſcure Corner of the World, and in how mean a Station ſoever, I am doing well, and keeping the Commands of my God, I am for this, in great Eſteem in that upper and glorious World. And I ſhall not ſerve God for nought. I cannot pleaſe him but it will redound to my great Advantage. He will reward my Performance of my Duty, my Payment even of what I owe him: So bounteous and ſo good a Maſter do I ſerve! And this will lead a Mans Thoughts to the next Particular to be mention'd, which is the laſt.

5. That which cannot chuſe but render a Religious Life very pleaſant, and therefore prove; it to be ſo, is, That it raiſes and maintains in a good Man, ſuch glorious and joylul Expectations as do, and may accompany it. How much Good! how much Bleſſedneſs may be expected from an Infinite Goodneſs and Love upon the Aſſurance of having pleaſed God, and of finding Favour with him! And then if we conſider the vaſt Bounty of his Promiſes to them that obey him, how much he has moſt willingly and freely engag'd himſelf to do for them; and how faithful and true he is in the Performance of what he promiſes: Theſe things will allow a good Man to entertain very great and very pleaſing Expectations. I dare appeal to any Man, whether it would not highly pleaſe and ſatisfy him to think and be aſſur'd that God peculiarly loves him, that he is a Favourite of Heaven; of an Almighty, moſt wiſe and unchangeable Friend; of him who is able to make thoſe he loves, eternally happy.

Muſt

Muſt it not pleaſe a Man to think I ſhall be ſure to want no good thing; I ſhall never be overcome or undone by any Evil; for *the Lord is my Refuge and Portion in the Land of the Living*; as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of himſelf, *Pſal.* 142. 5. What good Man can read and apply that to himſelf, which is ſaid for ſuch in *Pſal.* 91. 11. without a great deal of Pleaſure? *He ſhall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways:* To think, holy and kind Angels are continually about me, while I give them no Offence by any Sin or Impurity: They attend me in my Buſineſs; they watch me when I Sleep; they are willing to be about me to do all manner of good Offices: To keep off Evil Spirits, and deliver from the Harms they ſpread in my way. They are Witneſſes of my good Actions, and ſhall bear a kind and honourable Teſtimony for me at the great day of Judgment: They ſee in ſecret and ſhall applaud me openly. Theſe are ſome of the comfortable Expectations that attend a Religious Life. And yet further; If a Man conſiders what great and glorious things are laid up, or reſerv'd for thoſe that love God, and keep his Commands. What the Honours, the Felicities and the Pleaſures of the next Life will be to ſuch, and does expect to be a partaker of theſe, as a good Man may do, he will in ſome meaſure foretaſte the future Bliſs: The hopes of Heaven are Anticipations, they are Beams and Dawnings of the Joy and Glory there. The good Man then cannot chuſe but rejoyce in Hope, when he thinks, I ſhall e're long be remov'd from this wicked and miſerable World, to that, where only Holineſs, and Goodneſs

neſs, and Happineſs dwell. I ſhall go from Envy and Malice, from Reproach and Contempt, to joyful Congratulations and Love, to Applauſes and Commendations: I go no faſter to the Grave than I go towards Reſt. I ſhall labour then but for a few Moments longer, and ſhall reſt for ever. As I ſpend this Life I earn a better; the ſooner this ends, the ſooner that will begin. While I deny my own Inclinations now, and ſerve and pleaſe God, while I deſpiſe the Pleaſures of Senſe, and abſolutely refuſe thoſe of Sin, all which are but for a ſhort Seaſon, I am procuring to my ſelf everlaſting Satisfactions and Pleaſures: Theſe are Expectations that may attend a good Life, and in doing ſo, doubtleſs they will render it extreamly pleaſant.

Thus I have ſufficiently prov'd what the Wiſe Man here ſays, *The ways of Wiſdom* or Religion, *are ways of Pleaſantneſs.*

It remains now that ſomething be ſaid briefly, to promote that Uſe of this Truth, which Men ought to make of it.

1. And in the Firſt place, it ſhould ſerve to take Men off in ſome meaſure, from the Pleaſures of Senſe. I mean thoſe who are too much addicted to them. It is not the Deſign of Religion to make us refuſe and abſtain from all the pleaſing things of this World. We are allow'd to take and uſe ſoberly and thankfully, whatſoever God ſhall give us, and we can lawfully obtain of them. But ſince there is ſo much Pleaſure in doing well, this may reaſonably ſuggeſt to us theſe Two things.

1. That we ſhould not ſuffer our ſelves to be wholly taken up with worldly and ſenſual Plea-

ſure. We ſhould not yield our ſelves entirely to the Purſuit and Enjoyment of that, and let theſe Pleaſures ſtand by, neglected. He that governs himſelf moſt wiſely in this matter, and has the moſt pleaſant Life of all other, is he that takes care to enjoy both ſorts, as far as he may. And to enforce this Exhortation, we may conſider that without doubt, the Pleaſures of Religion are the ſtrongeſt and ſweeteſt of any. They ſink deeper into a Man than any other, and affect him more as they enter into his Mind, and put all the inward Powers of that, into a pleaſing Exerciſe and Motion. They poſſeſs more of a Man than thoſe that touch only his Body and Senſes. The Mind of Man is the moſt, and (as we may ſay) the greateſt part of him: It has moſt Deſire and greateſt Capacity of Pleaſure. It is much more ſenſible both of Pleaſure and Pain, than the duller Body. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks the greater Sweetneſs and Excellency of Religious Pleaſure, when he ſays of the Law of God, *It is ſweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb*, Pſal. 19. 10. He means the practice of Religion and Vertue, the doing any Duties commanded by the Law of God, afforded him a far greater Pleaſure and Delight, than e're he could by his Senſes receive from the moſt pleaſant things of this World.

2. Since there is ſo much Pleaſure in well-doing, this may juſtly perſuade Men off from the guilty Purſuit and Enjoyment of the Pleaſures of this World. Why ſhould a Man ſuffer himſelf to be guilty for the ſake of any Pleaſure, when he may enjoy that which is very Rich and Senſible, without being ſo? It is moſt certain,

tain, that Guilt will greatly allay the briskeſt Pleaſures of this World: *In the midſt of* guilty *Laughter, the Heart is ſad.* Theſe are always beſt and ſweeteſt to him that regularly and ſoberly uſes them, that uſes them according to the Rules of Religion: Thus he ſhall hurt neither his Body nor his Soul, nor his Eſtate, nor his Neighbour, while he pleaſes his Appetites, and gratifies his Senſes; and ſo he avoids the unpleaſing Farewell of a troubled Conſcience. He does not deſtroy the Appetite while he pleaſes it, but keeps himſelf in a capacity to have always a very lively Reliſh and Senſe of his Pleaſures. The irregular and intemperate Man makes a Drudgery of thoſe of this World, and turns their fine Reliſh eager and ſour: And the other ſort, that is the high and delicate ones of Religion, he utterly deprives himſelf of. In a vertuous and religious Courſe of Life, a Man may enjoy both ſorts; but in that which is guilty and irreligious, he cannot well enjoy either. This is the Firſt Uſe may be made of this Diſcourſe.

2. A Second is this. It ought to perſuade Men to betake themſelves ſteadily to a religious and good Courſe of Life. It was ſaid by the Spirit of God, that the ways of Religion are ways of Pleaſantneſs, with Deſign to recommend them to the Sons of Men. He ſpoke this in a kind Condeſcention to our Nature and Inclination; to make a Bait of Pleaſure, which we are ſo apt to dote upon. And this ſurely ſhould be a very powerful Argument to this purpoſe: This ought much rather to induce Men to be Wiſe and Vertuous, to act as becomes them, and

purſue their true Happineſs, than to make them guilty of Folly and Sin; of what is ſhameful and hurtful to them, and of what will incur their everlaſting Miſery. And how great an Obligation to Obedience is it, that the Laws of our Religion are thus contriv'd; that the Univerſal Sovereign has made the Inſtances of our Duty, ſo reaſonable and ſo good; that we may delight in our Duty, and the Performance of it, will reward it ſelf. They would exceedingly aggravate our Wickedneſs, and ſhew a ſtrange Obſtinacy in Sin, and Enmity to God, if we ſhould rather refuſe all this Happineſs and Pleaſure, than ſubmit our ſelves to the Laws of Religion. And thus I have far enough urg'd this Argument in our Text, to ſhew that they who will do wickedly, do obſtinately refuſe their own Intereſt. And to furniſh the Conſciences of Sinners with ſuch a Conviction, as will at one time or other, prove a ſharp Sting and Torment, if they will not ſuffer it now to reſtrain them from Wickedneſs.

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THE PRAYER.

MOst Great and Glorious Lord God! the Infinite and Perfect Being. The greateſt Excellency among thy Creatures lies in their greateſt Likeneſs and Conformity to thee. We give thee Thanks, O Lord, for that thou haſt made us capable of ſo great Honour, as the reſembling of thee in our Actions; for that thou haſt laid upon us ſuch Laws, as guide us to a noble Conformity to the Divine Nature. Thou didſt of thy bounteous Goodneſs make Man upright, inclin'd to ſuch Actions, and ſuited to thy excellent Law: But alaſs! we have defiled and polluted our ſelves with Sin, and are become averſe and unwilling, impotent and unable to keep thy Commandments: Our carnal Minds are Enmity to thee, and are not ſubject to thy Law, nor can be, till they be Renewed, Sanctified, and Created again in Chriſt Jeſus unto Good Works. O Lord, open thou our Eyes to behold the wondrous and alluring Excellencies of thy Law: Work in us to will and to do, according to thy good Pleaſure: Rectify the Apprehenſions, the Reliſh of our Souls, that we may find thy Commandments to be ſweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb. Lord make us ſo ſteddy and diligent in our Duty, ſo practiſed and inured to it, and ſo in love with it, that we may find thy ways to be to us, as they are in themſelves, ways of Pleaſantneſs. Shew and convince us of the Equity and Reaſonableneſs of all thy Service that it is perfect Freedom, that it is our greateſt Honour, that the Wiſdom of good Living, is our beſt Ornament; even as a Chain of Gold about

the Neck. Encourage us we beſeech thee to our Duty, with a conſtant Senſe of thy Preſence with us, of thy gracious Eye and Regard to all we do: Let us know thou doſt accept our ſincere Endeavours and imperfect Performances, through the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. Inable us to hope in thy Mercy, and aſſure us that if we put our Truſt in thee in Well-doing, we ſhall not be confounded. But eſpecially we pray thee, O Lord, ſhed abroad thy Love abundantly in our Hearts: Let Love poſſeſs us, Love move, Love direct and byaſs us; make us to love thee with all our Hearts, and our Neighbours as our ſelves; ſo ſhall we be reconcil'd to thy Commandments; ſo ſhall we run and not be weary; we ſhall ever walk before thee, and not faint in that bleſſed way. Renew us, O Lord, after thine Image, and make us Holy as thou art Holy, and Good as thou art Good, Merciful as thou our Heavenly Father art Merciful, and Forgiving as thou art ready to Forgive: Let our Lives and Converſations, ſhew forth the Vertues of him that has called us to his Kingdom and Glory.

Look down in Mercy upon all Mankind, reſcue the miſerable Slaves of the Devil, (who is the Ruler of the Darkneſs of this World,) from their ſad Bondage under him; and bring them into the happy Liberty of the Children of God. Save thy People, O Lord, and bleſs thine Heritage; govern them and lift them up for ever: And make all that name the Name of Chriſt, duly concern'd to adorn the Doctrin of God our Saviour in all things. Let thy gracious Preſence dwell in the Land of our Nativity; bleſs us with Peace and Plenty, with the Means of Grace, and the Efficacy of them to enlighten our Minds, to cleanſe our Hearts, to heal our Diviſions, to teach us all, from the Higheſt to the Loweſt, our ſeveral Duties towards thee. Give Health and Happineſs to our King and Queen, and teach us, and all their Subjects, our Duty towards them. Bleſs and direct all inferiour Magiſtrates, make them a Terror to evil Doers, and a Praiſe to them that do well. Let thoſe that Miniſter in Holy things, be a good Example to the Flock, and make us Followers of them

them as they are of Chriſt. We Implore thy Mercy upon all that are in Affliction, eſpecially upon thoſe who are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs Sake; give them Patience under their Sufferings, and a happy Iſſue out of all their Afflictions. Accept our humble Sacrifices of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, which we have this day offer'd to thee in thy Sons Name: And make the Word which we have heard, to have ſuch Influence upon our Hearts, and to bring forth ſuch Fruit in our Lives, as thou doſt expect from it. Give us a Night of ſafe and comfortable Reſt, preſerving us from Fear and Danger. And when we awake in the Morning, let us chearfully return to our Duty, in all our ways acknowledge thee; and do thou graciouſly direct our Steps for the Sake of Jeſus Chriſt. In whoſe Words we conclude theſe our poor imperfect Addreſſes.

OUR *Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever.* Amen.

THE
Eaſineſs of Religion,

EXPLAINED and IMPROVED.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Mat. 11. 29, 30.

Take my Yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: And ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.
For my Yoke is eaſie, and my Burden is light.

IT is a ſtrange and wonderful Degeneracy that the Humane Nature is fallen under, as appears from the wonderful Averſneſs that is in all Mankind to a religious and a vertuous Life. Religion

gion is the greateſt Ornament and Glory of the Humane Nature: It is the Cure of all our Defects and Diſparagements: It is our true and compleat Perfection: And yet we commonly appear to be moſt eaſily withheld from the Practice of it: We deviſe Excuſes to neglect it, we receive the moſt falſe and unreaſonable Prejudices againſt it without any Examination of them: We do often obſtinately perſiſt in Wickedneſs againſt the moſt weighty Inducements to do well.

Theſe Words of the Bleſſed Jeſus, who *came into the World to ſave Sinners*, and to that Purpoſe has taught us as well as died for us, do meet with one of the Prejudices againſt an Holy Life, which he knew to be very common in the Hearts of Men: And that is, the Imagination that Religion is a Task too hard for Humane Nature, and utterly impoſſible to be perform'd. Becauſe we muſt indeed take ſome Pains to be Religious; our lazy and unwilling Souls magnify the little Oppoſitions into Mountains of Difficulties, and make us think we ſhall never be able to get over them; and the way down to the bottomleſs Pit, ſeems eaſie and ſmooth, is ſtrow'd with Pleaſures, Riches and Worldly Honours; and theſe things eaſily allure and engage us to follow that. Againſt this fatal and diſcouraging Prejudice, our Saviour ſays in the Words of our Text;

Take my Yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: And ye ſhall find reſt unto your Souls.

For my Yoke is eaſie and my Burden is light.

Take

Take my Yoke upon you: That is, charge your ſelves with the keeping my Commands; ſubmit to my Government: For this Meaning the Word Yoke is wont to have in Scripture. *For my Yoke is eaſie, and my Burden is light.* It ſhall be poſſible to you to keep my Commands; you ſhall find I do not require of you, that which you cannot perform; that the Difficulties you may meet with are not invincible. And further to encourage the taking up his Yoke, he adds, *Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart.* If ye take up this Yoke, ye but take up that which I have born my ſelf: I am of a meek and ſubmiſſive mind; I do not diſdain to be ſubject to the Laws of Religion. I then command you nothing but what I have practiſed my ſelf; and your Obedience to theſe Laws will be your Imitation of me: And he adds further, *Ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls:* This ſhall be Peace and Happineſs to you.

In diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I think it may be uſeful for the better promoting the Deſign of them, to inſiſt upon theſe Three Heads.

1. To ſhew in what Senſe it may be ſaid that the Commands of God are eaſie to be obſerv'd: Which will be both Explication and Proof of our Saviours Words.

2. To ſuggeſt by what means we may beſt render this eaſie to our ſelves.

3. To urge by ſome proper Motives, the Uſe of thoſe Means.

In the Firſt place I ſhall ſhew you in what Senſe we may underſtand this, that 'tis eaſie to keep the Commands of God: And this will be ſufficiently repreſented in the Three following Particulars.

1. This

1. This is eaſie to a vigorous and earneſt Endeavour. 'Tit true, there will be continual Oppoſition made againſt it, by that Corruption that has gotten Poſſeſſion in our Souls, and by the frequent Aſſaults of Temptation from the World and the Devil: But yet theſe are Difficulties that ſhall be overcome by an earneſt and diligent Endeavour. Our Saviour ſays, *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate, for many I ſay unto you ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able,* Luke 13. 24. By the ſtrait Gate he means the way of Religion, which the Oppoſition of our Spiritual Enemies and our own unworthy Averſeneſs, do render a ſtrait Gate: This we cannot paſs *without* Striving, and a good Endeavour; but *with* this he intimates we may do ſo: This will ccompliſh what we deſire, but many *ſeek* to enter in, and ſhall not be able. To lazy Wiſhes 'tis exceeding difficult, indeed invincibly Difficult to be Religious: He that cannot perſuade himſelf to *ſtrive* with Earneſtneſs and Patience, ſhall never become ſo. And this is the reaſon why it remains with many, ſo diſcouraging a Difficulty all their days; they never proceed further than to a few lazy Wiſhes, or at moſt, to a few ſhort and faint Endeavours. They are good ſometimes when they meet with no Temptation or Provocation to be otherwiſe. But whenever theſe Aſſault, they preſently yield and renew their Sins.

2. It is eaſie to keep the Commands of God, with that Aſſiſtance which the Grace of God affords them who diligently ſeek it. 'Tis good and ſafe for a Man to deſpair of ſucceeding by his own Strength and Endeavour alone; but

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it is alſo fooliſh and abſurd, to conclude from our own Weakneſs, the utter Impoſſibility of keeping the Commands of God, becauſe we may obtain ſufficient Aſſiſtance from above. He that hath ſaid his Yoke is eaſie, hath, as we may ſay, therein bound himſelf to make good his own gracious Word; and we need not doubt but he will do this. Our great and kind Saviour we may be aſſur'd, is ready and able to help us in all our Difficulty and Weakneſs. *We have not an High-Prieſt* (ſays the Apoſtle of him) *that cannot be touched with a feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.* Heb. 4. 15. And from thence he adds in the 16*th* Chapter, *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy and find Grace, to help in time of need:* Since we have ſuch an High-Prieſt, ſuch an Advocate in Heaven, we are not to doubt, but upon earneſt and ſincere ſeeking, we ſhall obtain ſufficient Grace: We may come boldly for this; may ask with an aſſured Expectation to receive. Accordingly St. *James* tells us, *If any Man lack Wiſdom he may ask it of God, who gives to all Men liberally and upbraids not*, Jam. 1. 5. But let us alſo know, ſince we are bid ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate, that we muſt not expect the Grace of God will inable us to enter in without our Striving. As the Grace of God muſt make our Striving ſucceſsful, ſo our Striving is neceſſary to the obtaining the effectual Grace of God. Let us take notice to this purpoſe, of what God ſays by his Prophet concerning the People of *Iſrael*, in *Ezek.* 11. In the 18*th.* Verſe of that Chapter he mentions their earneſt Application of themſelves

ſelves towards the making a Reformation among them; and then in *Verſ.* 19. and 20. he ſays, *I will give them one Heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you, and I will take away the ſtony Heart out of their fleſh, and will give them an Heart of fleſh: That they may walk in my Statutes, and keep my Commandments and do them.* If then we apply our ſelves in great earneſt to be Religious, the Spirit of God will put this new Spirit into us, and we ſhall be renew'd in the inner Man, as the Scripture ſpeaks; and then it will be eaſie to us to keep the Commands of God. And the Grace of God reſtores our decayed Powers, and rectifies our Nature, and makes us ſuitable to the Divine Law. When this is wrought in us ſo far as it prevails, it will be as agreeable to us to perform good Actions, as it is for the Sun to ſhine and the Waters to flow. Theſe will be as agreeable and eaſie, as natural Actions to a Man that is in perfect Health and Strength. The Graces wrought in us in this rectifying of our Nature, do altogether conduce to the eaſie Performance of our Duty. I ſhall inſtance only in Love, which in the proper Exerciſes of it, is the fulfilling of the Law, and all the Exerciſes of Love are ſweet and eaſie. Love to God will make us ready, and inclin'd to perform all the Duties which we owe to God and Man. There is Strength in Love, it can do more than without it we could think poſſible to be done. It riſes againſt Difficulties, and will never ceaſe till it ſurmounts and overcomes them. This makes crooked Ways ſtrait, and rough Places plain: It is very laborious and diligent, and does alleviate and ſweeten Labour and Diligence.

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It delights to do whatever is pleaſing to God, and to expreſs by all poſſible ways, an Honour and Eſteem of him. Hence 'tis ſaid by our Saviour, *If a Man love me he will keep my Commands.* Thus if our depraved Natures were but rectified, we ſhould find it eaſie to perform the Commands of God. And this ſhews that they are eaſie in themſelves. To him that is born of God and does truly love him, *his Commandments are not grievous*; as the Apoſtle plainly intimates, in the 1 Epiſt. of *John* and the 5*th* Chap. by the Connexion of the 3*d*. Verſe there. Thoſe then that apply themſelves ſeriouſly to the Performance of their Duty, and wait for the good Motions of the Spirit of Grace, and carefully obey them when they are offer'd, they will find the Spirit of God ready to aſſiſt them; and after he has wrought in them to will, he will inable them to do: It is according to his good Pleaſure to do ſo. And it may be alſo concluded and expected from this which he has declar'd concerning himſelf, That *he does not delight in the death of a Sinner, but had rather that he ſhould turn to him and live.*

3. Religion is eaſie in compariſon to Vice and Wickedneſs; or is truly much more eaſie than that. It is indeed more ſuitable to the Frame and Conſtitution of our Nature than Wickedneſs is. Vertue however ſeldom it can be found, and though it be accounted difficult, is for all that, agreeing and ſuitable to the Eſſential Conſtitution of Humane Nature; and Wickedneſs, however common and familiar it is, is an adventitious and adverſe thing. The former is that we were made for, and ſuit-

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ed and fitted to the Practice of it, and then the latter muſt by Conſequence, be contrary to the Frame and Contrivance of our Nature. Religion is the Rectitude of our Nature, Wickedneſs is the Diſorder of it, Vice is an Aberration from Nature and the Deformity and Corruption of it. All the Motions of vehement Paſſions and unlawful Luſts, are Departures from true and right Nature: But from hence it muſt needs be, that Wickeneſs is the moſt difficult and troubleſome of the two. What is moſt natural muſt needs be moſt eaſie; and Vertue is in truth moſt natural. Accordingly, how does a violent and furious Paſſion diſorder the Mind, confound our Thoughts, and diſſipate and ſpend the Spirits! Is not an exceſſive and inordinate Motion of the Mind, more troubleſome than a calm and gentle one? And is it not eaſier and ſooner done, to uſe with Moderation and Temperance, the Pleaſures of Senſe, than to uſe them with Exceſs; the one ſooths and cheriſhes Nature, the other weakens, frets and hurts it. Beſides, may we not obſerve that Vice muſt be *Learnt*? that no Man can arrive at a great Degree of Wickedneſs without taking ſome Pains with himſelf for this? Further, it is moſt certain that any one reigning Sin is uſually tyrrannous, and requires more to gratify and ſerve it, than were neceſſary to anſwer all the Obligations of Religion. How many Vices coſt Men a great deal more than all the neceſſary Expences and Exerciſes of Charity, that Religion requires would come to? Do we not often ſee Covetouſneſs ſpending the Body with Labour, racking the Mind with Care, robbing Men of their neceſſary

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Reſt, and withholding them from the due Enjoyment of what they have, much more than ever Religion does require theſe things. The Laws of Religion are ordinarily ſatisfied without hazarding or impairing our Health or Eſtate, or Strength, but the Demands of inordinate Luſts often require theſe things of thoſe that obey ſuch. There are a Thouſand times more Martyrs to Sin and Wickedneſs in the World at all times, than ever there were to Religion under the moſt cruel Perſecutions. The Servants of Sin have the diſtracting Slavery of many Maſters, and the Commands of theſe are always very peremptory, and oftentimes contrary to each other. And in that caſe, while they gratify one Luſt, they do with a great deal of Self-denial, put off the Demands of another. There is uſually much more Self-denial practiſed in the Service of any one Darling Sin, than all the Laws of Religion would require together. We cannot look into the World without very often obſerving this, That if People would but take as much Pains to get to Heaven as they do to accompliſh Worldly Deſigns, there would be many more ſav'd than are likely to be. Thus Men ſubmit to Labour in other matters, while they refuſe to do it in Religion: And they cannot give up themſelves to any Vice, but it grows commonly ſo exorbitant, as to require more Pains and Labour than it would coſt us to do well. And thus much may ſuffice to be ſpoken to the Firſt Head; to ſhew in what Senſe Religion may be underſtood to be eaſie. The next to be inſiſted on is this, To ſhew by what means we may beſt render it ſo *to us*, and leſſen as much

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as may be, the Difficulty that accidentally attends the Practice of it. I will ſuppoſe there is no need to urge the diligent uſing of the common appointed means of Grace, ſuch as Prayer, hearing the Word, and the Sacraments: It muſt be very evident to any one, that we muſt not expect to become good and religious, whilſt we neglect theſe: But I will inſiſt upon ſome Advices leſs Obvious.

1. We muſt take care to be well and fully reſolved to keep the Commands of God. He who has only ſome faint Wiſhes and feeble Purpoſes to do this: He who halts as it were between Two Opinions, and cannot yet determine which to adhere to: That is, one while purpoſing to be Religious, and ever and anon returning to his Sins; ſuch a Man will have it always difficult to do well, and will never be able to overcome the Difficulty of it. There is nothing does more magnify the Difficulty of Religion, than an unreſolved Will: But a good Reſolution encreaſes our Strength againſt it. We ſee in all Matters if a Man be fully reſolved, no Difficulty is able to diſcourage him; Deſire and Reſolution will make him ſtrive till he has overcome. To poſſeſs our ſelves then with a good Reſolution, we ſhould well conſider the abſolute Neceſſity of a Religious Life; that this is neceſſary to our Tranquillity and Happineſs in this Life, and alſo in the Life to come; that we muſt be Religious to ſave our Souls from the Everlaſting Torments of Hell. A deep Senſe of Neceſſity will give us greater Strength and Power againſt all Oppoſition, according to what the Philoſopher ſaid long ago, Δύναμις γὰρ ἀνάγκης ἔγγυθι ναίει (*Pythag.*) *Neceſſity and Power dwell near together.*

gether. A Senſe of Neceſſity gives a firm and vigorous reſolution, and that gives Strength to perform. If we apprehend the abſolute Neceſſity of our being Religious, in order to the Salvation of our Souls, this will rouſe us to ſuch an Endeavour and Reſolution, as no Difficulty will be able to withſtand.

2. As we muſt be throughly reſolved, ſo we ſhould begin, as ſoon as we can to be religious, that we may make it as eaſy as we can. This is a thing of great Importance to this Purpoſe. We take all Impreſſions eaſieſt in our younger Years. Vices are then like tender Plants eaſily rooted up and deſtroyed: and Vertues, by an early Practice of them may grow up with us, and be rooted betimes, and by being inured a long while to them, they will be very familiar and eaſy. If we do not mind this, to begin betimes to be religious, our evil Inclinations will grow up into habits, and we ſhall be accuſtomed to do Evil; and this is to encreaſe the Difficulty of Religion up to the higheſt degree; as the Prophet intimates plainly in that Queſtion, *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye alſo do well that are accuſtomed to do evil.* This miſchief Men do themſelves by delaying to be religious; they make it much more difficult to be ſo than otherwiſe it would be.

3. As we ſhould begin betimes, ſo we muſt endeavour to be very ſteadfaſt and diligent in Well-doing, to make it eaſy to us. We muſt not often interrupt and break off our courſe of doing good; this will make us ſuffer as often as we take it up again the difficulties of *beginning* to

to be Religious, we ſhall be always but *beginning*. The ſteady and diligent repetition of the ſame Acts begets an Habit, and makes thoſe Actions at length familiar and eaſy: And there is nothing in a good Life, but in this way will become ſo to us: Cuſtomary and conſtant Practice will overcome the greateſt difficulties of this, as well as of any other courſe. It was therefore excellent Advice which the Philoſopher (*Pythag.*) gave his Scholars when he ſaid, *Chuſe you the beſt courſe of Life, and Cuſtom will render it the pleaſanteſt.* The more we exerciſe our ſelves in well-doing, then, the more eaſy it will be to us. If we are unſteady, we ſhall be always weak, if conſtant, we ſhall encreaſe in Strength, as is ſaid, *Job* 17. 9. *The righteous ſhall hold on his way, and he that hath clean Hands, ſhall grow ſtronger and ſtronger.* Spiritual Strength encreaſes as the Natural does, by diligent Exerciſe; and as that encreaſes, our Duty muſt needs become the more eaſie to us.

4. *Laſtly*, To this Purpoſe we muſt carefully avoid the Temptations to any Sin. There can be nothing more abſurd than for a Man to be careleſs in this Matter, and yet to complain of the difficulty of Religion. He complains of the difficulty, and yet by his own Folly encreaſes it. He that ſeeks and entertains himſelf with the Temptations to Sin, can never eaſily abſtain from it, or live a vertuous and good Life. Theſe when they are neareſt, have greateſt force, and are weakned as we keep them at a diſtance: And our Inclination to Evil will always be ſtrongeſt when 'tis excited by Temptation, and favoured with Opportunity to exert its ſelf: Temptation

and Opportunity are to our Evil Inclinations, like Oyl to a Fire; which pour'd on it, will encreaſe its Strength and Fury. As we put out Fire by with-drawing the Fuel, ſo we muſt extinguiſh and weaken the Fire of Concupiſcence by avoiding Temptation; thoſe Circumſtances which we have found are apt to draw us into Sin, we muſt carefully ſhun them if we can.

Theſe are the Endeavours which muſt be oppoſed to the difficulties of Religion, and the means whereby we may render it very eaſy to our ſelves. If Men will but diligently take this Care, they ſhall not fail to find it true, which our Saviour ſays, *My Yoke is eaſy, and my Burden is light.*

Now becauſe our Saviour himſelf adds ſome Motives to the taking up his Yoke, beſides this aſſurance of its eaſineſs; I ſhall proceed in the laſt place to urge this too; That if we do not find it ſo eaſy at our firſt Attempts, as we would deſire, we may yet not be diſcouraged, but perſiſt in our Endeavour, and conſtantly take this courſe which has been directed to diminiſh the difficulty we meet with. To which Purpoſe, let theſe following things be conſidered; which things will alſo help to ſettle and confirm us in good Reſolutions, and ſo will promote the eaſineſs of Religion

1. All the Difficulty of Obedience will be no excuſe for our neglecting it; This will not excuſe us in the Sight of God, tho he be very merciful and forgiving: For certainly, this does not diſanul our Obligations to it. As we are bound to obey, we are bound alſo to endeavour and ſtrive to obey; and the rather, becauſe upon

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our good endeavour and ſtriving, we ſhall be inabled to do it. Thoſe difficulties which we might overcome cannot excuſe, if they do diſcourage us; and it is very unreaſonable that ſuch ſhould diſcourage us. We have no Fortitude in us, no due Senſe of Gods obliging Goodneſs, of his terrible Wrath, of the Excellency and Honour of Religion, if ſuch Difficulties can diſcourage us. We trample upon all the Inducements to Obedience, and *are not* good, only becauſe we *will not* be ſo.

But further; this difficulty ariſes from our ſelves, from the guilty corruption of our own Natures; *The Law is Spiritual, and we are Carnal*; that is *Holy, Juſt and Good*; we are unholy and ſold under Sin; and hence is it difficult to us to obey the Laws of God; hence we are unable: So that we have contracted our own Inability, and therefore we muſt not think that this will excuſe us. As well may a Man think his prodigal waſting of his Eſtate, ſhould make what he ows, not due to his Creditors; as that this ſhould excuſe our keeping the Commands of God.

2. Let us conſider, that we have the Example of our Saviour, to quicken and encourage us to our Duty. 'Tis true, he had not that inward hinderance of it, which we are unhappily encumbred with; but yet even. He was not free from many external Diſcouragements and Temptations. He ſuffered many Indignities and Perſecutions from Men; he died for the Teſtimony that he bore to the Truth: And was obedient unto Death, even the Ignominious and Miſerable Death of the Croſs. Nothing could divert him from

from doing his Father's Will, and fulfilling the Work that he came into the World about. And it greatly recommends the Yoke, which he calls us to take up; that it is the ſame that he has born himſelf. He bids us learn of him in the Text; to learn ſubmiſſion and obedience by his Example. He ſpent his whole Life in a willing Obedience to the Commands of God. He condeſcended to make himſelf ſubject to the Law of God. And let us conſider, it was for our ſakes that he became ſo; to fulfill the Law on our Behalf, and ſatisfy the Demands of it, which we cannot fully ſatisfy; and ſo to purchaſe for us, the glorious Rewards of perfect Obedience. 'Tis he who has thus oblig'd us, who calls us to take his Yoke upon us. And ſhall we refuſe to take a little Pains to pleaſe him who denied himſelf ſo much, and condeſcended ſo far for our Advantage? We ſee that he expects this of us, he requires us to learn of him, and follow him in Obedience: And can we think he will ever own us, if we do it not? Can we imagine that this is not then a neceſſary Condition of finding Favour with him, of obtaining his Interceſſion for us, and of his owning us at the great Day of Judgment?

3. Let us, then, ſet the Inconveniencies that Men are expoſed to in a courſe of Wickedneſs, againſt the difficulties of Religion, and conſider which of the two is moſt fit to be choſen: Whether thoſe difficulties which may be overcome, or the Inconveniencies that cannot be avoided, and are intolerable. Certainly, theſe latter things are not enough conſidered, when Men forſake their Duty, becauſe of the little Labour and Self-denial, that it would put us to. Let me

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then briefly propoſe to you ſome few things to be further thought on at your Leiſure.

1. Conſider the grievous and heavy Calamities in this Life, which the Sins of Men always expoſe them to, and often bring them under. Evil purſueth Sinners, 'tis ſaid; and how often do we ſee that it overtakes them too, with a very ſudden and terrible Vengeance? The Judgment and Wrath of God often mixes with the Sinner's pleaſant and profitable Sins, and does utterly ſpoil and imbitter them. Idleneſs, Drunkenneſs, and Uncleanneſs, bring a Man often to Rags and Poverty. Diſeaſes painful, loathſome and mortal are the frequent, troubleſome effects of Intemperance, and lawleſs Luſts. Tho the World be very lamentably wicked, yet are ſome Sins Matter of Ignominy and Shame in the ſight of the World. And Men have made Penal Laws againſt ſome ſorts of Wickedneſs; and he who will take no pains to reſtrain and regulate himſelf, is often left by the Spirit of God to fall into thoſe Sins, which ſubject him to the Ignominy, and Loſs, and Pain of thoſe Penalties. The Afflictions of this Life are very grievous and uneaſy to whoever falls under them, and he that conſtantly provokes Almighty God muſt needs be moſt expoſed to them: And theſe are moſt heavy and ſenſible to the wretched Sinner, whoſe Heart is ſet on the things of this World, and who wants thoſe inward Conſolations that are wont to ſupport good Men under their Afflictions. Sin in its Nature tends to miſery. Is it not our Wiſdom then to take a little pains to avoid Sin, rather than to expoſe our ſelves for want of that pains, to a great deal of Miſery? To the

the ſuffering of much Affliction, and that too, from the Wrath and incenſed Juſtice of God, which will give, what ever we can endure, the greateſt Sharpneſs and Aggravation that it can poſſibly have?

2. The Sinner is liable to the anguiſh and pangs of a guilty Conſcience; which are far worſe things than any outward Afflictions, and certainly much more intolerable than all the Labours or Self-denials of Religion. Guilt when a Man is ſenſible of it, is a very heavy, and uneaſy Burden: *Solomon* very juſtly ſays, *A wounded Spirit, who can bear?* When a Man's Conſcience tells him he has plaid the Fool, he has deſerved the Hatred of God, and the Contempt of Man; he has needleſly, and madly hurt his own Body, impair'd his Eſtate, and blaſted his Reputation; he has made the Almighty God, and the Supream Diſpoſer his juſt Enemy; that he has forfeited his Life, and all that he enjoys and delights in to Divine Juſtice; that Vengeance hovers continually over his Head, that he may juſtly fear every Black Cloud to be charged with it; that *evil* haunts and *purſues him* every where; that he is always, as it were on the brink of the Bottomleſs Pit; that he hangs over the Everlaſting Flames, but by the ſlender and weak Thread of this mortal Life: Theſe Thoughts will imbitter his ſtrongeſt Pleaſures, and ſpoil the Comfort and Joy of the greateſt Proſperity. And theſe Terrors he is expoſed to continually, who will not live well. We muſt often feel theſe, or take pains to be Religious. It coſts the fooliſh Sinner a great deal of Labour and Endeavour to divert theſe Thoughts, when with

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leſs labour he might prevent the Sins that occaſion them; and notwithſtanding all his Endeavour, they will have their times to invade and afflict him.

3. Without taking Pains to be Religious, the Sinner muſt endure the everlaſting Torments of Hell: Is it not then apparently wiſer to bear the taking Pains to be Religious, than to bear thoſe Torments? The Difficulty of Religion will abate and grow leſs, but thoſe Torments will never abate. He that thinks the Rules of Religion ſuch an ungrateful Confinement, will certainly account that Eternal Priſon a worſe, if ever he comes there. He that will not deny himſelf at all now for the conveniency of Serving God, and for the doing of his Duty, ſhall be denied all Comfort and Satisfaction there for ever. He that will not mortify his Sins muſt die himſelf for them, a miſerable and eternal Death. And muſt needs bring himſelf at laſt to that; for there is no Middle Way between the Broad and the Narrow One, nor a Middle State, at the End, between Happineſs and Miſery. And is it not eaſie now to determine between theſe Two things, where to fix our Choice; Whether we will endure the ſhort Labours of Religion, or be condemned to dwell with everlaſting Burnings? This is a Third Argument.

4. Laſtly, Our Saviour in the Text, affords us another, with which I ſhall conclude; and that is, *We ſhall find Reſt to our Souls:* This ſhall be the bliſsful Reward of our taking up the Yoke of Chriſt. This Labour in Religion brings to Reſt, when that in Sin, brings to Torment and Trouble. The Firſt and preſent Fruit and

Reward of it, is Reſt and Peace within; a happy Freedom from tormenting Paſſions, from craving and unruly Luſts and unquiet Appetites: Freedom from the Fears of Death and Damnation. And then Religion has the Hopes of Reſt to come; for *there remains a Reſt for the People of God:* A Reſt even from the preſent Labours of Religion. We ſhall have an Eternal Reſt for a few Moments Labour and Striving: *He that endures to the end* of a ſhort Life, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved: To him that overcomes* (ſays our Saviour) *will I give to ſit with me in my Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſate down with my Father in his Throne, Rev.* 3. 21. Here is a Promiſe of Safety, Honour and Reſt for ever; of a glorious, honourable and happy Reſt. Thus if we will but be ſo wiſe as to *endeavour* the avoiding everlaſting Miſery, we ſhall be rewarded with everlaſting Happineſs.

The PRAYER.

MOſt Great and moſt glorious God, excellent in thy Nature, and wonderful in thy Works; in Wiſdom haſt thou made them all. Every Creature was perfect in its kind, and fit for all the Uſes and Operations that would become it, and that thou didſt intend it for. And thou, O Lord, madeſt Man a rational Creature with an immortal Spirit in him; as he was therein fitted, for great and noble Actions, ſo thou didſt intend him for Actions, ſuitable to the Dignity of ſuch a Nature; thou didſt intend him to know and adore thee, to love and praiſe thee; to do good, to practice Juſtice, to exerciſe faithfulneſs and truth, to make a ſpiritual and religious uſe of the Things of this World, and to do thy Will on Earth, as the bleſſed Angels do it in Heaven. Oh Lord, with

with what great grief and ſhame do we look back upon our Original excellency, when alas, we have wretchedly loſt it; and from being made by thee, but little lower than the Angels, we have made our ſelves more vile than the Beaſts that periſh; inſtead of living like Angels, we are become earthly, ſenſual and deviliſh. Oh how unfit are we now; how unable to do any thing that is good! We cannot ſo much as think a good Thought, or ſpeak a good Word, or perform a good Action! We cannot do what we were made for! We cannot anſwer our honourable End, but do degrade and debaſe our ſelves, by living far below it. And that is become now difficult to us, and unpleaſant, which before was eaſy and pleaſant: It was originally natural to us to be vertuous and Pious, it was as Meat and Drink to be doing our Fathers Will; but now our diſorder'd Faculties naturally do ill: We muſt endeavour to do Good, and cannot without thy Grace attain to it. This Grace therefore O Lord we humbly ſeek; we earneſtly implore in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt. And we thank thee for the leave we have to ſeek, for the hopes to attain it. As a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth thoſe that ſeek him: And if earthly Parents know how to give good Gifts to their Children, much rather do we believe that thou our heavenly Father wilt give the holy Spirit to them that ask him. Oh grant us the conſtant influence and aſſiſtance of thy good Spirit. Let us never yield to any Difficulty of performing our Duty, but earneſtly ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate. Quicken our Endeavours with the hopes of Aſſiſtance, Strengthen them with the expectation of a glorious Reward, and continue them to perſevere to the end, by the Aſſurance that we ſhall hereafter be Partakers of everlaſting Reſt. Let us never be a weary of well-doing, but ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, as knowing that our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord: We humbly thank thee O Lord, for the Liberty of approaching thy Sanctuary, and of uſing thy Ordinances; do thou we pray thee, give them a mighty Efficacy and Power upon us: While we thus wait on the Lord, let us renew our Strength, and with freſh Vigour, run the way of thy Commandments: We commit

commit our ſelves to thy gracious Protection this Night; make we pray thee, our Reſt comfortable to us, by a Senſe of thy Favour and Forgiveneſs: Raiſe us up again the next Morning, if it pleaſe thee, from our Beds, thoſe Emblems of the Grave. And make us in whatever our Hand finds to do, do it with our Might, becauſe there is no Work nor Labour, nor Wiſdom nor Knowledge in the Grave whether we are going. We recommend to thy Infinite Mercies, O Lord, all Eſtates and Conditions of Men. O God, who declareſt thy Almighty Power moſt chiefly, in ſhewing Mercy and Pity, Mercifully grant to all Men, ſuch a Meaſure of thy Grace, that they running the way of thy Commandments, may obtain thy gracious Promiſes. We beſeech thee to keep thy Houſhold the Church, in continual Godlineſs, and that through thy Protection it may be defended from all Adverſities, and devoutly given to ſerve thee, in all good Works, to the Glory of thy great Name. We pray thee, let thy Favour and Mercy reſt upon theſe Nations wherein we live; forgive us, Oh Lord, our manifold Tranſgreſſions, give us Peace, and eſtabliſh Truth to continue among us, ſo long as the Sun and Moon ſhall endure. Bleſs our King and Queen, with all the Bleſſings of this Life, and a better. Proſper their Government over us, to their own Comfort and Happineſs, and to ours. Teach us all who are under them in our ſeveral Stations, to do our Duties towards thee and them, and towards one another, to thy Glory, and to the common Peace and Welfare. Bleſs all our Friends and Relations, comfort all that are Afflicted, relieve the Oppreſſed, help them to Right that ſuffer wrong. Theſe things Oh Lord, and whatever elſe, for our Ignorance, we cannot, or for our Unworthineſs, we dare not ask; we humbly beſeech thee to grant, through the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous: In whoſe Words we conclude our Prayers, ſaying,

Our Father, &c.

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THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF *SIN* demonstrated.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 22. 8.

He that soweth Iniquity shall reap Vanity.

THough the Holy Scripture has told us of our Adversary the Devil, that he is a Liar from the Beginning, and the sad Experience of Mankind has found him so, yet has he the Art to impose upon us still, and we

are ſo fooliſh as to credit his Suggeſtions: By the very ſame Cheat and Deluſion with which he drew our firſt Mother into Sin, does he draw and perſwade her fooliſh Poſterity alſo to the Commiſſion of it. He made her believe it would be of great Advantage to eat the forbidden Fruit, that this would mightily improve their Condition, and make them more Excellent and more Happy: *God doth know* (ſaid he) *That in the Day ye eat thereof your Eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.* Thus did the Serpent beguile her, *She took of the Fruit and did eat and gave it to her Husband and tempted him to eat too:* But this inſtead of advancing their Condition ſadly impair'd it; immediately were theſe our Parents driven out of Paradiſe, they became ſubject to Sorrow, and Miſery, and Shame, and Death; and were deſpoil'd of their greateſt Glory, the Image of God in their Souls: Thus inſtead of becoming more excellent and happy, they render'd themſelves and all their Poſterity exceeding miſerable and vile.

But hereby has our Adverſary learnt what ſort of Suggeſtion is very apt to prevail with Mankind; he has found we are ready to receive and follow that which ſeems kind to us, we love to be flatter'd in our Inclinations, and to have thoſe things ſaid to us which may perſwade us to allow and gratifie them, and we liſten to that which promiſes great Advantages. Therefore he tells Men they need not fear to be wicked, there is not ſo much ill in it as ſome Men out of deſign would perſwade them: He

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tells them it is the only chearfull and pleaſant courſe of life to follow their inclinations; that 'tis the only profitable and advantageous courſe and the way to do themſelves moſt good, to conform to the common Sins, to run with the Multitude to do evil; to follow the ſame ill ways that ſome are ſeen to raiſe their Fortunes by: He tells us, and we too commonly believe him, that in breaking the Commands of God there is great Reward.

To antidote and fortifie our ſelves againſt this deluſive Suggeſtion of the Father of Lies, Let us obſerve what the Spirit of Truth tells us in the Text, and fix our Thoughts a-while upon it at preſent, that we may hereafter remember it to our Advantage. He ſays, *He that ſoweth Iniquity ſhall reap Vanity. He that ſoweth Iniquity*, that is, He that lives an ungodly and unrighteous courſe of Life, he that does any thing that is ill: *He ſhall reap Vanity*, that is, he ſhall be wofully diſappointed in his expectations of receiving any conſiderable, or real advantage thereby. That is ſaid to be *vain* in Scripture which does not reach the purpoſe it was intended for; which diſappoints and fruſtrates the hopes and expectations that are built upon it: So thoſe Oblations are called vain which were not accepted with God: And the Idols of the Heathens, which bore an appearance of what they were not in Reality and Truth, and were not able to help thoſe that truſted in them, are for this reaſon call'd there *Vanities*. This then is the Import and Meaning of theſe Words ſpoken by *Solomon*: A courſe of Wickedneſs is very falſe and

deceitfull, it promiſes Men much perhaps, but performs little; and he who expects any real Advantage, any true Content and Happineſs in ſuch a courſe ſhall be miſerably diſappointed.

I think it not unneceſſary to inſiſt upon the Proof of this Truth, for 'tis what the World are not eaſily convinced of. Though we may ſee it verified in the Experiences of other men very often, yet we will not impute their ill Succeſſes and Unhappineſs to the Deſerts and Nature of the Courſe they chuſe, but we impute them rather to ſome Indiſcretion and Folly of thoſe men in the Management of themſelves which we purpoſe to avoid, and ſo we hope to reap thoſe advantages from the ſame courſe of life which we ſee others cannot. Yea further it is very common, that men are not convinced of this Truth, though their own Experience might inform them: Though they have found an Emptineſs and Vanity in a wicked and careleſs Life ſo far as they have tried it, yet they will be ſo fooliſh as to hope ſtill for what they can never obtain; they will think there is ſome Content and Satisfaction beyond them, and on they go in this wrong way to purſue it. He that finds not this in one ſort and train of Vices will hope to find it in another: He that ſees the Emptineſs and Vanity of Voluptuouſneſs and Pleaſure, will, after that, think there is great Reward in Covetouſneſs and Ambition, great Happineſs in the Riches and Honours which he thinks to gain by them; and thus the deluſion continues with many men

men to the end of their days, and to their final and eternal vexation and diſappointment. I ſhall therefore induſtriouſly prove this Truth; and then add ſome Application of it.

And we may be fully convinced of this, that *He that ſoweth Iniquity ſhall reap Vanity*, if we will conſider well the following Particulars.

1. The Sinner does not always gain the things he purſues by his guilty Endeavours. An overruling Providence governs all things, and brings to paſs whatſoever the Univerſal and Sovereign Diſpoſer pleaſes: And this Providence often blaſts the Endeavours of wicked Men. The Lawleſs Voluptuary cannot always catch the guilty Pleaſures he purſues: Every covetous man cannot be rich, nor does Ambition certainly riſe to the Honour and Authority and Reſpect it aſpires to. We may often ſee men giving themſelves up to worldly purſuits and neglecting every thing elſe, and yet that they can with all this Application and Endeavour, gain but very little of this World: We may often ſee, that the very ways they take to accompliſh their Deſires, as ſeeming to them the moſt likely to do ſo, do tend to fruſtrate them. The Wiſe Man expreſſes this in the Inſtance of Covetouſneſs, *Prov.* 11. 24. *There is that ſcattereth and yet encreaſeth* (ſays he) *And there is that with-holdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.* A man may liberally beſtow all that is due to Juſtice and Charity, and Gene-

roſity, and yet increaſe; and another may think to grow rich by ſordid ſaving, by withholding his Neighbours due, by crafty and fraudulent Bargains, by refraining from Acts of Charity and Generoſity, and yet notwithſtanding theſe thriving Tricks may be but poor. In this Reſpect is their Iniquity vain, that it does not always attain the things it ſeeks. And it muſt needs be, that the Wickedneſs of the World muſt ſometimes meet with this ſort of Diſappointment, ſince, as the Scripture tells us, *The Curſe of the Lord is in the Houſe of the Wicked*, Prov. 3. 33. If this be ſo, it ſhall work to the Sinners Vexation and Miſery in one way or other, and it does this ſometimes in this way.

Though 'tis alſo true, that God does many times give Men the things which they ſeek even by guilty Endeavours: He lets the wicked Voluptuary accompliſh his guilty Deſires, and the Covetous or Ambitious perſon thrive in Wealth, and riſe to Honours by ill Arts, there is many a Villany thus far proſperous in the World.

But then to make good ſtill what our Text ſays, it may be added,

2. All that a Man can gain by Wickedneſs is of very little worth and goodneſs. The Fruits of Sin are very empty things. The Sinner gains but the Goods of this World, the Accommodations of this preſent Life. He at beſt enjoys but Creatures; and they have all their ſufficiency from God, their greateſt Goodneſs comes from his Bleſſing, and that the Sinner cannot

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enjoy with them: They are like gaudy Clouds, but ſuch as are empty and without Rain, they are as broken Ciſterns that can hold no Water: The Sinner feeds on Huſks like the wretched Prodigal. Theſe things may pleaſe him much while they are new, but in a little time he has ſuckt out all the Sweetneſs of them, and they pleaſe no more; and like the Bee he often ſpoils the Flower which he ſucks the Honey of his Pleaſure from. How often may we ſee thoſe Enjoyments after a little while loath'd and diſdain'd, which were ſought with the moſt earneſt Deſires, which the Man was ready to do any thing to gain them, and which at firſt perhaps he thought he ſhould take a great and a long delight in? What he thought would be a great Pleaſure and Happineſs, he after a little while finds to be an ungrateful Drudgery; and that which he expected would be the Comfort of his Life, proves the tedious Burthen of it. Men commonly expect more from the things of this World than they are able to afford, and ſo are diſappointed.

Beſides; the Goodneſs and Uſefulneſs of all that which is gotten by Wickedneſs, terminates in the Body of a Man; all the Rewards of Sin are but outward Goods: They may ſerve ſometimes the Neceſſities and Conveniences of his Body, but are of no uſe to his Soul. And they cannot ſerve all the Neceſſities of his Body neither, ſo little goodneſs and worth is in them. A man's Wealth and great Eſtate cannot give him a ſtrong Conſtitution, nor certainly preſerve him in Health, nor always purchaſe the

Recovery of it when 'tis loſt; as by all our taking Thought we cannot make one Hair white or black, nor add one Cubit to the Stature; Wealth cannot make the crooked body ſtreight, nor the deformed beautiful: The Body may be pleaſed, but 'tis hurt too by guilty and intemperate Pleaſures; they deſtroy the Appetites they pleaſe; they impair the Health and Strength, and wither the Beauty of the Body; they are uſually cloſely attended with uneaſie Loathings, and painful Diſeaſes. Wealth and Honours cannot defend a man from a Peſtilential Air, nor poſſibly hinder, but that he ſhall be ſometimes incommoded by extremities of Weather; they cannot purchaſe him a fair Day, nor a warm or cool one according as he has occaſion. Theſe cannot reprieve a man from the Grave, nor cure him of Mortality; the Rich as well as the Poor, the Honourable as well as the Mean muſt die, and go down to the place of Darkneſs and Contempt; *They that truſt in their Wealth, and boaſt themſelves in the Multitude of their Riches* (ſays the Pſalmiſt) *None of them can by any Means redeem his Brother, nor give to God a Ranſome for him, that he ſhould live for ever, and not ſee corruption*, Pſal. 49. 6, 7, 9.

Thus they are but ſome of our Neceſſities that the things of this World can ſerve, and they are only outward ones too, as well as not all them. And beſides, as was ſaid, Theſe things are of no uſe to the Soul of Man which is his Nobleſt part: His Soul is utterly neglected, and the Intereſt of that are forgotten and quitted, while he

he in the ways of wickedneſs purſues and enjoys the things of this World. The Mind can take no delight in guilty and forbidden Pleaſures, it is never exerciſed in a ſerious Reflection upon them, but with Pain and Torment. This is the meaning of what *Solomon* ſays of them, *Prov.* 14. 13. *In laughter the heart is ſad, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.* And as it has no Pleaſure in theſe, ſo much rather has it no profit or advantage from them: They indeed hurt and prejudice the Soul, they ſuppreſs and debaſe it, they engage its Thoughts and Powers in the Service of the Body, they make it a Slave and Drudge to its Inferiour, while it neglects and forgets its own true Intereſts and Pleaſures; they hinder all honourable Improvements of the Mind, or the Exerciſes of ſuch to our Honour and Comfort. A Man ſhall never become the wiſer or the more uſeful, the more worthy and commendable, for a large and exceſſive Enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſures: His Mind ſhall not be the more ſteady or ſtrong, or the more compoſed and eaſie for this; but on the contrary, he ſhall be the more weak and inconſtant, diſturbed and unquiet, and they will occaſion in him a great deal of hurtfull Folly and Paſſion.

And as little Profit or Benefit to the Soul can ariſe from the Wealth or Honours of this World. Theſe cannot cure a ſhameful Vice, nor conceal, but rather expoſe it; they cannot allay an uneaſie turbulent Paſſion, but rather inflame ſuch: They cannot heal any of the Diſtempers of the Mind, nor adorn it, and make it amia-

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ble in the ſight of God. Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath: They cannot attone for the Sins which are committed in the getting them: He that ſells his Soul for Wealth cannot ranſome it again therewith: They are greatly miſtaken when they think, that a few outward Acts of Charity at the End of their Lives will make amends for Covetouſneſs and Extortion, Rapine and Fraud, practiſed through the whole courſe of them. The Sinner by all his Labour and Cares, gets no Intereſt in God the chiefeſt Good: Though he poſſeſſes vaſt heaps of Gold and Silver, he has no Treaſure in Heaven: Though he has Goods laid up (as he thinks) for many Years, yet has he made no Proviſion for a happy Eternity. He does not purſue, and therefore cannot gain, in his way, the chiefeſt and moſt important good things, the moſt neceſſary and the Eternal ones: He gains but ſome of the loweſt and meaneſt Rank with the beſt Succeſs of all his Endeavours. Very fitly then to this purpoſe does the Wiſeman ſay, *The treaſures of wickedneſs profit nothing, but righteouſneſs delivers from death*, Prov. 10. 2. It is as nothing, all the Benefit that we receive from them, in compariſon to this great benefit which we want, and they are not able to beſtow.

3. For further proof of our Text it may be added, that whatſoever Worth or Goodneſs there is in thoſe things which men gain by wicked Practices, the Pleaſures and Satisfaction of it are mightily allay'd, and ſometimes utterly

terly ſpoilt by the uſual Attendants of their Wickedneſs. It is truly ſaid in Scripture, that Evil purſueth Sinners: And this it does ſo fatally and ſurely, that it commonly mars even their Portion in this Life, which is all the Portion of Good that they enjoy. To this purpoſe is that which *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 22. 17. *Bread of deceit is ſweet to a man, but afterward his mouth ſhall be filled with gravel.* Something or other there ſhall uſually be to ſpoil the Pleaſure and Comfort of the Fruits of Wickedneſs. I ſhall mention ſome ſuch things which are alſo the uſual Attendants of it.

(1.) The reſtleſs cravings of inordinate Luſts do often ſpoil the Pleaſure and Satisfaction of ſuch a man's Enjoyments. When he has what he ſought, and it may be ſold his Soul for, it does not ſatisfie but rather encreaſes, and inflames the deſire it feeds. Vicious deſire (and the Sinners is ſuch an one) is uſually boundleſs and unſatiable too: It does but encreaſe with gaining the things that gratifie it, whether they be in Pleaſures, or Profits, or Honours. *Solomon* ſays, *He that loveth Silver ſhall not be ſatisfied with Silver, nor he that loveth Abundance with Encreaſe*, Eccleſ. 5. 10. And with reſpect to ſenſual Pleaſure, he ſays, the Eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the Ear with hearing. An exorbitant and vitious Thirſt is not quenched by the largeſt Draughts of Pleaſures, though Natures juſt and moderate Deſires may be. And the Caſe is the ſame with the ambitious Man; one Step of Honour makes him deſirous

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of another; and after the Addition of one City or Province to his Dominions he thirſts for more. Gather Gold (ſays one) heap up Silver, build ſtately Walks, fill the Houſe with Slaves, the City with Clients, or Creditours; if you cannot compoſe the Affections of the Mind; if you cannot put an end to unſatiable Deſire; if you cannot free your ſelf from vexing Cares and Fears; you but give Wine to one in a high Feaver, or Honey to one ſick of the Jaundice: This gratification does but encreaſe the Diſeaſe, and then a man is a Slave to his Luſt, and muſt toil with endleſs Labour to ſatisfie that which can never be ſatisfied: and his Enjoyment does not ſo much ſweeten his Labour, as his Labour ſpoils his Enjoyment. This continual craving is like a continual Thirſt or a raging Hunger: His deſire of having more, often makes him even deſpiſe what he has already gain'd, though it be never ſo fit to content him: And he does in effect want what he has, while it cannot give him content, and reſt: He wants not the leſs for all that he has gain'd, ſince his Deſire and Luſt encreaſes with his Acquiſitions: He hazards what he has to gain more ſometimes, and it may be like the Dog in the Fable, loſes it too. Thus is the Sinner hinder'd from the comfortable Enjoyment of what he gains by Wickedneſs.

(2.) This alſo comes to paſs ſometimes from the hatred and envy of the World, which he incurs by his wicked Practices. He that gets what he has by the wrong and abuſe of his Neighbours,

bours, muſt needs incur their Hatred and Envy with it: If a mans Hand, like *Iſhmael's*, be againſt every other man, that he may promote his own Advantage, then every other mans Hand will be againſt his. Wickedneſs naturally tends to diſturb the peace of the World, but Juſtice and Goodneſs tend to promote and preſerve it. He that loves ſhall be lov'd, he that hates ſhall be hated, he that wrongs men will be ready to wrong him, and he that ſeeks no bodies Good but his own, no body will ſeek his Good.

Some render the words of our Text; *He that ſoweth Iniquity ſhall reap Iniquity*; which is the ſame thing with what our Saviour ſays, *what meaſure ye mete it ſhall be meaſured to you again.* But thus is the Care and Anxiety of the Sinner encreaſed, which the miſtaken man thought he ſhould put an end to, by his gaining ſuch and ſuch things. *Nemo autem ſollicito bono fruitur*, ſays the Moraliſt: This care and fear hinders the comfortable enjoyment. 'Tis through many hazards and much difficulty and danger perhaps that he got what he has, and now he has not a ſafe or quiet poſſeſſion of it. The Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of the Proſperity of ſuch men, ſays, *they are ſet in ſlippery places*, Pſal. 37. 18. When the Sinner has goods laid up ſufficient for many years, yet he cannot always ſay, *Soul take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*, becauſe he is allarm'd with fears of loſing what he has and is troubled with the Uncertainty of his Condition. He is now perhaps in more care, and engag'd in greater toil and labour to keep, than it coſt him

him to get what he has: And thus is he further hindered from the comfortable enjoyment of it.

(3.) This very often comes to paſs from the ſmart laſhes of his own Conſcience. His own Mind will not let him enjoy what he has with any comfort; while that is upbraiding and condemning him for baſe treachery and perfidiouſneſs, or barbarous cruelty and oppreſſion which he uſed in the getting it. That gives him great diſturbance while it calls him fool and brute in the midſt of his guilty Pleaſures, and tells him how he hurts his Body, impairs his Eſtate, wrongs his Neighbour, offends God while he follows them. What pleaſure can a man take in the applauſe of Flatterers, in the reſpect of Inferiors, while his Conſcience tells him that God above hates and deſpiſes him, with the world of Holy Spirits he is odious and contemptible. There can be no enjoyment of what a man has, while his Mind tells him 'tis all forfeited by his Sins, he has it not with the favour of God but with his diſpleaſure; that He whom he has offended in getting it, can take it away when he pleaſes, that he is therefore in continual danger of loſing it all, he is always obnoxious to a divine Vengeance; If he can hope to defend himſelf from Men; he cannot hope to defend himſelf from God. How unhappy muſt he be who conſiders that as he has heaped up riches he has treaſured wrath too: that this wrath ſhall be likely to curſe his Family, that they ſhall never have a comfortable enjoyment

joyment of what he has gathered for them, and that it ſhall lie heavy upon himſelf, at farthest when he comes to die, and muſt go to give an account for what he has done in the Fleſh: As it is no profit to a man, ſo he ſhall have no comfort in the thoughts of it, if he would gain the whole world and loſe his own Soul for it: And ſuch Thoughts as theſe the guilty Conſcience will often afflict a man with. But the Stings and Rebukes of a guilty Conſcience will make themſelves incomparably more ſenſible than any ſenſual pleaſures can be: for while theſe ſtroke and tickle the Senſes and reach but to the Body, they pierce even to the Center of the Soul (as ſome Philoſophers would ſpeak) and fix themſelves and dwell there.

(4) This often comes to paſs by the Juſt Judgment of God upon the Sinner. Here we may remember again what was ſaid before, that the Curſe of the Lord is in the Houſe of the wicked. He in Judgment gives them up to the Temptations of the Devil, and to the Conduct of their own violent Luſts: He condemns them to ſuffer the Tyranny of their own Paſſions, and the diſorder of their Appetites: their hearts ſhall be continually knawn with Envy, their Spirits may be oppreſt with exceſſive griefs even for the ſmalleſt or for meerly Imaginary inconveniences; their Minds ſhall be toſt and continually agitated with vain fears, doubtfull and anxious hopes, with reſtleſs and inordinate deſires: And what comfort can a man take in his life when he is tormented with theſe painfull diſeaſes

diſeaſes of the Mind! what can be the conſequence of theſe things, but offence and diſtaſt, wearineſs and tribulation! they know not what it is to moderate a Paſſion, to curb a Deſire, to mortifie a Vice, and ſo are ſubject to divers Maſters, are enſlaved to many Tyrants, and expoſed to a multitude of Tormentors; which like a Legion of Devils will not let a man reſt Day nor Night.

Beſides; We are in this vale of tears ſurrounded with many outward calamities, expoſed to Innumerable Evils, and we cannot be ſafe among them but from the conſtant protection of the Divine Providence: And this the Sinner has no right to, and he often wants it. The juſt Providence of God often leaves him to the aſſaults of theſe, and ſometimes one croſs ſhall make him uneaſie, and when that is gone another ſhall vex him; one while he ſhall be afflicted with pain, at another time with loſſes, at another with contempt and reproaches. The ſupream diſpoſer of all things ſets himſelf to mingle ſorrows and grief and inconveniences with his portion: He will not let him enjoy any thing pure or without the mixture of ſome ſorrow in it.

And further, there is ſometimes a ſtrange and ſecret diſpenſation of Providence attends the Sinner, which hinders him from taking any delight or comfort in what he has, and we can hardly tell why he does not. This is expreſt by Solomon, *Eccles.* 6. 2. where he ſays, he had ſeen *A man to whom God had given riches, wealth and honour, ſo that he wanted nothing for his Soul*

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of all that he deſired, yet God had not given him power to eat thereof: that is, God with-held from him a power to enjoy, to comfort himſelf and take delight in what he had. This is a ſtrange caſe, but is what we may ſee ſometimes happening! We may ſee ſome pining and diſcontented in that condition wherein they thought to be very happy, and they cannot give a good reaſon why they are ſo, they cannot take delight in what they thought would have been very delightful, and that which is ſo to others: But the power to enjoy, is it ſeems from God, and is another and a different gift from the things that we poſſeſs; and the Sinner may gain large poſſeſſions by his guilty endeavours, but may want the bleſſing of God upon them and the power to enjoy them. How many covetous perſons may we ſee wanting what they have while they have no heart to uſe it to their Credit or Comfort; to what purpoſe are ſuch men made rich? And many may we ſee thinking themſelves mighty unhappy in circumſtances which others are ready to envy: and afflicting themſelves with Imaginary Inconveniences, while they are under no other real one but onely that of their own ſick and fooliſh Imagination. Thus does the powerfull curſe of God mingle its ſelf with the Sinners Portion, and ſpoil the pleaſure of what he has while he poſſeſſes it. And this is the third Proof of our Text.

(4.) It may be ſaid he that ſoweth Iniquity ſhall reap but Vanity, in that all the Felicity of a Sinner, is of a very ſhort and a tranſitory du-

ration. Let him gain what he will; let him take what delight and comfort he can in it; this will laſt but a very little while: It is a Felicity but of a few moments continuance: His happineſs is like a fire of thorns which is almoſt as ſoon out as it is kindled. It can laſt no longer than this preſent life, and then it muſt needs be ſhort. This Life is continually haſting away, and ſo is all his happineſs. The Pſalmiſt truly ſays *Man being in Honour abideth not*, Pſal. 49. 12. And *Solomon* ſays, *If a man live many years and rejoyce in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkneſs for they ſhall be many*, Eccles. 11. 8. They ſhall be many in compariſon to the longeſt life on Earth. The Sinner then is to enjoy what he gets here but a little while and is to be much longer without it; for as he came naked into the world ſo he muſt return naked out of it. Perhaps he ſpends the greateſt part of his Life in getting, and enjoys but for a little while in the latter end of it. His Labour and Care take up the moſt of his life, and his reſt and eaſe have but a very ſmall parcel of it. It may be as ſoon as he has by any means ſcraped together a plentiful portion of this world, and then propoſes to himſelf to ſit down and enjoy it, he is then ſuddenly ſnatcht away from all by Death. Let us ſay then with the Pſalmiſt, *Verily every man in his beſt Eſtate is altogether Vanity*; and by Conſequence it muſt be true what our Text ſays, *He that ſoweth Iniquity, ſhall reap* but *Vanity*. And this I think to be now ſufficiently prov'd.

APPLI-

APPLICATION.

I shall now briefly suggest some use that we may make of these things and conclude.

1. These Justifie the Providence of God in permitting the outward Prosperity of wicked men, and should keep us from being any way disturbed when we observe it. The foregoing Discourse does abundantly demonstrate that this is a thing very well consisting with a Providence, and agreeing enough with the Wisdom and Justice of it. God gives them but a poor, low, mean and outward prosperity: That may be said of any wicked mans Prosperity, which the Prophet says of theirs who were the Enemies of God's Church, Isa. 29. 8. *It shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his Soul is empty: Or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his Soul hath Appetite; so shall the multitude be* (says he) *of all the Nations that fights against Mount Sion.* Wicked men can have no content, no satisfaction in their Prosperity. We value these low outward goods too highly, we account them better than they are when we envy an ill man the possession of them: These are such things as a man may have without the favour and blessing of God: A man may have them and not enjoy them. When we see the gaudy outside of a sinners condition, and are apt to *call the proud* fool *happy* for it, let us consider what

may dwell within him at the ſame time; and there perhaps we may ſee ſhamefull folly, hurtfull vices, uneaſy paſſions; He is perhaps held bound in the chains of his Sins, and his own diſorderly Appetites and Paſſions are his cruel tormentors; and can we think ſuch a man highly favoured, or ſo much deſerving envy as Diſdain or Pity? Let us conſider too the ſhort continuance of all this felicity, and not be afraid of theſe men, not be diſcouraged in our duty, nor impatient if we ſuffer by them. *For they ſhall ſoon be cut down as the graſs, and wither as the green herb*, Pſal. 37. 2. Within a little while the powerful wicked men will be weak, and the rich poor. He whoſe Pride and Ambition troubled all the world, and could not be contented with the bounds of a large Kingdom, ſhall in a little time be ſtript of all his greatneſs, be confin'd within the compaſs of a few feet of Earth, and become Priſoner to a Grave.

2. To conclude: Let what has been ſaid be able to turn us all from a wicked to a good and vertuous courſe of Life. Let us reſolve to leave an unprofitable courſe of Life; and ceaſe to ſpend our Labour for that which is not Bread, and our Mony for that which will not profit us. Let us not endure the Thoughts of loſing a Life, of living to no good purpoſe, to no advantage to our ſelves: 'tis altogether fooliſh and unbecoming our reaſon to chuſe a vain life, and to aim at no good and profitable end.

But this will appear a very great and ſtrong argument if we will conſider too that this courſe of life

life as it will not profit, 'twill hurt us; as it can afford no great advantage, it will bring great damage: It forfeits and loſes us the favour of God, the everlaſting happineſs he would beſtow on us: It provokes his wrath and tends to everlaſting miſery; and ſhould we follow ſuch a courſe for no advantage, to get nothing that is of any great worth by it? It greatly heightens the guilt and folly of Sin, that there is ſo little reaſon for it, ſo little inducement to it; It is a thing unneceſſary and unprofitable. Let us all then reſolve immediately to forſake the ways of Sin, and betake our ſelves to a courſe of Vertue and Religion. We ſhall find that in keeping the Commands of God there is great Reward. We ſhall not ſerve God for nought tho' we ſerve the Devil ſo: *Our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; tho' *if we ſow Iniquity we can reap but Vanity.*

THE PRAYER.

O Most great and most righteous God! the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee; nor can any time set Bounds to thy Duration; nor the power of any Creature can resist thee. Thou art worthy to be fear'd and had in reverence by all that draw nigh unto thee. We adore and worship thee, O Lord, who art every where present and knowest all things. Thine Eyes behold, and thine Eyelids try the Children of Men. And thou, O Lord, dost dispose of us all as pleaseth thee, thy Kingdom ruleth over all. If thou favour us, it is well with us: If thou hide thy Face, we are troubled and afflicted; if thou take away our Breath, we die, and return to the Dust from whence we were Created. We do entirely depend upon thee, and in thy Hand is our Breath and all our Ways. But, alas, how little do we fooliſh Creatures conſider theſe things! when we live as without God in the World, when we take little care how we behave our ſelves in thy ſight. We do not regard and ſeek an Intereſt in thy favour as our greateſt Happineſs; nor have we ſo fear'd thy Diſpleaſure as we ſhould. Oh how fooliſh and miſtaken have we been, while we have thought to mend our Condition, or profit our ſelves by doing ill, or to do our ſelves any good by breaking thy Laws! In vain do we ever attempt to be Happy in ways offenſive to the pure Eyes of thy Glory. Thou wilt ſooner or later reward every Man according to his Works. We believe, O Lord, according to thy Word and thy juſt Sentence and Doom that Evil purſueth Sinners: That all the Profits and Pleaſures which we can gain or enjoy by Wickedneſs are very vain and worthleſs; that in purſuing ſuch we ſhould weary our ſelves for very Vanity. Convince us

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we pray thee, O Lord, ſteadily and effectually of theſe things; let us not ſell our Souls for nought; let us not ſpend our Life in the purſuit of ſhadows, and neglect ſubſtantial things; teach us that he who ſows unto the Fleſh, ſhall of the Fleſh reap Corruption. And make us to believe, that in keeping thy Commands there is great Reward; to believe that thou art, and art a Rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek thee; that we ſhall not ſerve God for nought: But if we do by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, we ſhall obtain eternal Life. Let thy bounteous and faithful Promiſes effectually allure us from the ways of Folly and Perdition. O that we were ſo wiſe, as conſtantly to take thy Teſtimonies for our heritage! to deſire above all things the Happineſs which thou haſt prepared for them that love and ſerve thee! O turn thou, we humbly pray, the Byas and Propenſity of our Souls that way! Give us not up to the choice and purſuit of this World; condemn us not to have all our Portion in this ſhort, miſerable and tranſitory Life. Strengthen and encreaſe our Faith of unſeen things, that it may be in us the Evidence of things not ſeen, and the Subſtance of things hoped for: and let this quicken, let this encourage us at all times to our Duty, by aſſuring us that our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord. By aſſuring us of everlaſting Reſt to reward our Labours in well-doing, of our having fulneſs of Joy in thy Preſence, and Rivers of Pleaſures at thy Right hand for evermore. Deliver us, O Spirit of Truth, from all the deceits of the World, the Fleſh and the Devil; lead us into all Truth neceſſary for us to know in order to Salvation, and make us to purſue the things which make for our everlaſting Peace. Give us, we pray thee, a Treaſure in Heaven, through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt.

In whoſe Name we humbly make our Prayers and Supplications for all Men: Give, O Lord, to all Nations Unity, Peace and Concord; and pour out thy

Spirit upon all Fleſh, that they may all know thee from the leaſt to the greateſt. Bleſs thy Church and proſper it, and make it yet more Holy and more Univerſal. Bring in all Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks into the way of thy Truth, and into the way of Salvation. We pray thee pour down thy abundant Bleſſings upon theſe Nations wherein we live; deliver us from thoſe that hate us: continue to us thy true Religion eſtabliſht among us in the Adminiſtrations of it, and continue us in the due and univerſal Practice of what it teaches and requires of us. Bleſs, we pray thee, our King and Queen, and Magiſtrates; be thou their Guide and Defence, and make them uſeful Inſtruments to promote thy Glory amongſt us, and our Happineſs. Let us know thoſe that are over us in the Lord and admoniſh us, thoſe who are thy Miniſters in Holy things, and eſteem them very highly in Love for their Works ſake, and follow their Godly Counſels, and good Examples. Grant, we beſeech thee, that the means of Grace which we have this Day enjoy'd, may be effectual upon us to the Salvation of our Souls. Pardon the imperfections of our Services, and graciouſly accept them through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt. In whoſe Name we preſent and dedicate our ſelves to thee, we recommend our Relations and Friends to thy Mercy, and all that are deſolate and afflicted; and we pray for the pardon and converſion of our Enemies. We commit our ſelves to the Care of thy Providence this Night, beſeeching thee to keep us in ſafety while we are not in a Condition to look to our ſelves: And if it ſhall pleaſe thee to add yet more days to our Lives, we deſire to ſpend them all in thy excellent Service; to which purpoſe we humbly implore the continual Guidance of thy Spirit, to whom with the Father and the Son, one Infinite and Eternal God, we aſcribe all Praiſe and Glory, for ever and ever.

Our Father, &c.

GOD'S

GOD's Hatred of Sin

Demonstrated and Improv'd.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 15. 9. Former Part.

The Way of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.

IT is in the Heart of most Sinners, that God takes little or no notice of what is done by us here below, or if he does take notice, that 'tis without any concern about what we do: They do not think those things offend

offend him which they encline to, and which are pleaſing to themſelves; nor will believe that he is ſo diſpleaſed as ſome repreſent him to be with any of their Actions. And from hence it is ſo ſmall and light a matter with many to do thoſe things which are ſinful: It is that which many are accuſtomed, and habituated to do, and are contented to be ſo. The ſmalleſt temptation is able to make a man commit a Sin: Yea without any temptation they will readily run into it; and inſtead of avoiding and repelling temptations, they induſtriouſly ſeek them, and delight to entertain them. It is become ſo common a thing to do wickedly, that men have no horrour at any but the very groſſeſt crimes, ſuch as would leſſen a man's reputation in the World, or expoſe him to Penal Laws, and they are but very few.

But theſe things come to paſs for want of a due conſideration of ſuch Truths, as that which the Wiſe man here delivers, in ſaying, *The way of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.* The moſt Holy and Almighty God takes notice of the Actions of men, is acquainted with all our ways, and reſents with Infinite diſlike and hatred, whatever we do that is contrary to his moſt excellent Commands. It is not an indifferent thing to him what our Actions are: But as he that made us has given us Laws for the direction of our Actions, ſo every tranſgreſſion of thoſe Laws and Rules, which is that which is call'd Wickedneſs, is odious and abominable to him. A very terrible Conſideration this is to thoſe that have not taken any notice of it before,

fore, and so have liv'd carelesly; but it is therefore necessary to such, to reclaim them from these offensive ways: And if any man does so well lay it to his heart, as to give it power to do so, he shall find it as happy and comfortable in the fruits and effects of it. To put you in mind of this, I shall at present fix my Discourse upon it; and to give it the more force, I shall insist upon these Heads of Discourse concerning it.

1. To confirm and prove what is here said.
2. To shew you the Inferences which we may raise from it.
3. To make some Application.

In the first place, I shall endeavour to make this undeniably evident and clear, that *The way of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.*

To prove this in the shortest and most convincing method, to the reason of Mankind, I shall chuse to insist upon these Arguments, which will shew whence this comes to pass, that the Sins of men are so odious to Almighty God. I shall make appear *Why* it is thus, which will moreover prove *That* it is so. And that by the following particulars.

1. There is a sort of contrariety in Sin to the very Nature of God, or a peculiar and extraordinary unlikeness to him. Upon every thing besides this, that is, upon all that God has made, there is some impression of some of the divine Attributes, and so with the Infinite disproportion and inequality between God and a Crea-

ture

ture there is yet ſome likeneſs: But upon Sin there is nothing of this, it has no Character of any Attribute of God, and it utterly defaces all ſuch things upon any Creature, ſo far as it prevails in that Creature. His excellent Law is but a Tranſcript or Copy, as it were, of perfections and excellencies that are in himſelf; his Law is holy, juſt, and good, as he is holy, juſt, and good: When we break thoſe Laws, then we become as unlike him, as 'tis poſſible for us to be; and we act as he in his Nature does abhor to act. When we deſpiſe and diſhonour him, and act contrary to that ſuperlative Eſteem and profound Reverence which is his due: This is contrary to what is natural (as we may ſay) to him; who does neceſſarily, and juſtly eſteem himſelf, and ſeek his own honour and glory, as he is an infinitely excellent and perfect Being, the ſource and firſt cauſe of all other, and ſupream to all. All true and ſincere Love is conformity to God: *He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him; for God is love*, ſays the Apoſtle, 1 *John* 4. 16. And then all Malice, and Envy, and all the Exerciſes of them are contrary to him. When we are enrag'd with every little affront, or will not forgive thoſe that injure us, theſe things are contrary to the Nature of God, who is ſlow to anger, and willing to be reconcil'd. All the filthy and ſenſual Sins which men commit, carry a Contrariety to the pure and ſpiritual Nature of God; to his juſt preference and eſteem of ſpiritual Properties and Qualities, before thoſe that are only belonging to material things.

things. When we lie and deceive, and impoſe upon our Neighbour, this is contrary to the divine Faithfulneſs and Truth. When we proudly deſpiſe and diſdain thoſe that are below us, rather than encourage and comfort them; and inſult over the afflictions and miſeries of our Neighbours, rather than endeavour to relieve and help them; this is directly contrary to the condeſcending Goodneſs of the Almighty; who though he be infinitely above us all, yet he has regard to and takes care of the meaneſt of his Creatures, and does not deſpiſe even the leaſt of them: Thus are the Sins of men contrary to the Nature of the Bleſſed God. But from hence it muſt needs come to paſs, that they are alſo abominable and odious to him. As the moſt holy God does neceſſarily love himſelf, and takes delight in the incomparable Excellencies of his own Nature; ſo that which is thus contrary to thoſe Excellencies, muſt needs be infinitely dereſtable and offenſive. He can never be out of love with himſelf, therefore he can never be reconcil'd to any ſinfull Act, nor take notice of ſuch a thing, without infinite dereſtation and abhorrence.

2. The Sins of men are contrary to the Creatour's deſign in making Mankind, and therefore alſo are an abomination to him.

His firſt and immediate deſign and end in this, as in all other of his Works, was his own Glory: To magnifie and honour himſelf by the Excellency of his Works, by leaving upon them the Characters of thoſe perfections that made them. And the excellency and worth of his

Works

Works is to his praiſe; hence 'tis ſaid by the Pſalmiſt, *All thy works praiſe thee, O God*, Pſal. 145. 10. that is, they acknowledge thy glorious Perfections each of them according to their Nature, by repreſenting the Marks and Characters of thoſe that are employ'd in the doing them. Now Man having in his conſtitution an immortal Spirit, which is capable of being wiſe, juſt, good and true, the Creatour endow'd him with thoſe Qualifications, that he might repreſent, as far as his Nature was capable, theſe Excellencies and Perfections of his Authour: And in retaining theſe we had done him that honour, as we may ſpeak, but in that we have loſt theſe we cannot pay it. This our Church intimates in her excellent and moſt inſtructive Liturgy, when we are there directed to pray to God, that we may be enabled by his Grace, to ſhew forth his Praiſe not only with our Lips but in our Lives, by giving up our ſelves to his ſervice, and by walking before him in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs all our days. In the Exerciſes of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, we praiſe and honour him who made us for ſuch Exerciſes; and that we ſhould therein repreſent theſe perfections of our Maker: But when we forſake the Rules of theſe Vertues in our practice, we deprive him of that Honour.

Again, we may doubtleſs ſuppoſe, that it was the Creatour's deſign to entertain and delight himſelf in the reflections (as it were) of his own glorious perfections from the Creatures that he had made: And this ſeems to be intimated at leaſt in the Hiſtory of the Creation, where

where he is repreſented as taking a review of every days work, and as approving or being pleaſed with it. Now this reflection of his own excellencies, and the ſatisfaction attending it, he enjoyes in us when we are pure and holy and good and true. But in all our Sins we contradict this deſign, and do preſent to his view nothing but what is contrary to his nature, nothing but what is therefore to the utmoſt degree diſpleaſing to him.

And then as this is contrary to his deſign in making us, it muſt needs be that the Sins of men muſt be highly offenſive to God. His deſign and end is Juſt and Excellent, that which fruſtrates and contradicts it then muſt be Vile and Unjuſt. But we ſpeak after the manner of Men when we ſay that the Almighty and Allwiſe God does not attain his end in any of his works, becauſe the neceſſity of our weak capacities requires this, and his condeſcending goodneſs allows it, that we may be the more ſenſible of what is ſaid of him. We are therefore to conclude that the ſins of men are moſt highly diſpleaſing to God upon this account from what we may obſerve in our ſelves in a like caſe; from the diſcontent and diſpleaſure we conceive when we have laid out much care or labour, or much coſt upon a particular deſign and it is all fruſtrate, and comes to nothing of what we expected from it.

3. The Sins of Men contradict all the Rights of the Great Creator, and therefore muſt needs be deteſtible to him; This neceſſarily follows from the former: He that makes any thing

may

may design it for what end he pleases, and then he has right to expect it should serve that end which it was made for. Since God raised up the Bodies of our first Parents from the Dust, and breathed into them the breath of Life, and he by a divine and secret operation fashions each of us in the womb, and still formeth the Spirit of man within him, he is then the Authour of all our Faculties and Powers both of Soul and Body. And then he has right to design the end and purpose for which we shall serve: And he directs us to that end by the Rule of his most excellent Laws; when we observe them weanswer our end, when we break those Laws we do contradict it, and therein we rob him of his due and deny him his right; and we may be sure he is concern'd to have what is due to him from his Creatures; He is sensible and provok't when we deny him his right; This is a monstrous Affront, and most unworthy behaviour towards him. There arises from this foundation a Threefold right which God has to our Obedience, all which is contradicted by the Sins of men, and every particular makes some addition to the Evil and Vileness of Sin.

(1.) All our Sins are against the right of a Sovereign Lord; such an one has the great God over all his Creatures. *He is God over all*, as the Apostle speaks: and the Prophet says, *Thou even thou art Lord alone*. Neh. 9. 6. He is our Sovereign Lord, and in exercise of his Sovereignty has laid his Laws upon us, and in submission to them we ought to acknowledge it. Mankind are not left at liberty to act as they will,

and

and to own no Superiors, we are all under a Law, and that is the Law of him who is the *King Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, the only wiſe God*, 1 Tim. 1. 17. All our Sins then are contrary to an unqueſtionable right of Sovereignty over us. The Sinner deſpiſes the Empire of the great Lord of the World: he does as far as he can depoſe him from his Throne, tramples upon his Laws, and ſlights his Authority. It is the implicite language (at leaſt) of all Wickedneſs, who is Lord over us? who ſhall controul us? we will not have the Lord to rule over us! The Sinner makes himſelf his God, and ſets up his own Will and Inclinations for a Law to him. What is ſaid of the ſenſual and voluptuous Sinner, that he makes his Belly his God may be applied to all other ſorts; He that is Covetous or Ambitious, makes himſelf his God, he makes it his End to gratifie his own deſires in other kinds; for this reaſon is Covetouſneſs in particular call'd Idolatry. Thus there is Rebellion and Idolatry in all Sin, and the greateſt Arrogance and Pride! while the poor depending Creature will not own his dependance, but will live to himſelf alone as if he were ſufficient to himſelf; and while we do not ſuffer him to diſpoſe of and govern us who alone is Lord over us! And can we think that the Jealous God will not highly reſent what comes under theſe black characters!

(2.) God has a right to our Obedience as he is Owner and Proprietor of us all. He is our owner, we are his Property. God ſays of all things that he has made, *the world is mine and*

the fulneſs thereof, Pſal, 50. 12. and Pſal. 100. 3. 'tis ſaid, *we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture*. The Pſalmiſt had acknowledged juſt before, that it was *he that made us and not we our ſelves*: To which this is added as what does truly follow from thence. This then does give him an unqueſtionable right to diſpoſe of Mankind as well as of the reſt of his Creatures. The Apoſtle makes uſe of this Argument, and ſays, *Glorifie God in your Body and in your Spirit which are Gods*. 1 Cor. 6. 20. Should not God have Liberty to do what he will with his own, to order and appoint the actions and uſe of it as pleaſes himſelf. But the Sinners ſay in all the Tranſgreſſions of their Words, *our Tongues are our own*; and the ſame they pretend to concerning all their faculties and powers in all other their Sins. Theſe deny the univerſal Proprietor that right of governing and diſpoſing as he pleaſes what is his. But how would it enrage poor contemptible man to be denied this Liberty? And if we think it reaſonable and juſt for us to be angry in ſuch a caſe; how can we imagine but God muſt be highly diſpleaſed?

(3.) God has the right of a Great and Bountifull Benefactor to the Obedience of Mankind. He it is that has given us our ſelves, and all that we have: He freely made us: He made us to enjoy large exerciſes and expreſſions of his Bounty. He furniſht the world which we ſo much delight in with all the good things it contains, and gives to every man the portion which he delights and comforts himſelf with. We have nothing but what we receiv'd from Him.

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He daily loads us with his benefits. And when he has done ſo much for us, without any obligation laid upon him by us to the doing of it, does not this lay a great obligation upon us to ſtudy what will pleaſe him, and to do his Will? Ought we not to be very thankfull to him who has greatly favoured us? to pleaſe him who ſo often pleaſes us? to honour him who has crowned us with Honour and Dignity in making us little lower than the Angels, and giving us dominion over the things about us? In our Sins, then, there is the baſeſt Ingratitude as well as Injuſtice and Arrogance and Pride. We affront and Injure a Friend. He gives to us in many things what he does not owe, and demands of us nothing but what is his due. He cannot be beholden to us; we cannot oblige him. This enhances the rate and value of his Benefits, and by conſequence the Obligation of them too; and that as much heightens the Evil and Ingratitude of our Sins. God expects a thankfull Obedience in return for the benefits he beſtows; This is the meaning of that Preface to the Ten Commandments. *I am the the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the Houſe of Bondage.* And he is very highly and juſtly offended if his Obligations do not meet with ſuch a return. It was ſaid, with a very angry reſentment, of the Nation of Jews; *I have nouriſht and brought up Children, and they have rebelled againſt me*, Iſa. 1. 2. Therefore the Heavens and the Earth are called to bear witneſs to, or to admire ſo enormous a thing: As if the Sun ſhould be aſham'd that he

had ſhined upon ſuch Creatures, and the Earth that it had born ſo ungrateful a Burden. And when 'tis added in the fourth verſe of that Chapter; *They have forſaken the Lord*, 'tis alſo ſaid, *They have provoked the Holy One of Iſrael to Anger.* We cannot imagine ſurely but it muſt exceedingly provoke the Great God to return him Evil for Good; to return Hatred for Kindneſs, and Injuries for great and Innumerable Beneſits: yet this is the unfitting return which ſinfull men make to their kind and gracious God.

Inferences.

Thus I have, I ſuppoſe, ſufficiently prov'd the Truth of what is aſſerted in our Text, *That the way of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.* I ſhall now make this appear to be a very important and concerning Truth, ſuch as deſerves to be well laid to heart and always remembred by every one of us. And this will appear by the Inferences which it affords us; which I ſhall now ſet before you.

1. This implies and may teach us the exceeding Vileneſs and Evil that is in Sin. This may very juſtly be concluded merely from God's Hatred of it; and by our way of proving the Text while the hatred of God againſt Sin has been juſtifyed as well as prov'd we may be helped to make this concluſion very eaſily. It certainly infers a real and great diſparagement and baſeneſs in the thing its ſelf to be hated of God. He is infinitely wiſe and juſt, and can never through any miſtake or envy or unjuſtice call Evil good or good Evil. He does never condemn or diſlike any thing that is really excel-

lent

lent and good; nor approve or eſteem of any thing that is truely vile and evil. Accordingly Sin is, and we ſhould account it to be, the vileſt and worſt thing in the world. This has a peculiar unlikeneſs to the Divine Nature which is the Center and Rule of all Excellency, and has the greateſt contrariety and unlikeneſs to it that can be. And it muſt follow that this does more than all things elſe, debaſe and diſhonour a Man: there is nothing can make him ſo vile, ſo contemptible as this, and nothing can render him truly deſerving of Honour while he harbours and vilifies himſelf with this; the greateſt worldly Honours cannot honour this, but this can ſtain and diſhonour them. This can make the Noble Creature Man more vile than the Beaſt that periſh. This deſerves our greateſt ſhame and abhorrence: So far is it from reaſon, ſo highly abſurd for a man to be proud of his wickedneſs and make a boaſt of his Sins: This were to glory in his ſhame.

2. We may alſo inferr God's Hatred of the Sinner as ſuch. The latter part of the Text ſeems to direct us to make ſuch an inference from this former; which ſays, *But he loveth him that followeth after righteouſneſs*: as he loves the Righteous Man for his Righteous ways, he muſt needs hate and diſlike the Sinner for his Wicked ones. So *David* ſays, *Pſal.* 5. *Thou art not a God, that haſt pleaſure in Wickedneſs: neither ſhall Evil dwell with thee. The fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight: Thou hateſt all workers of Iniquity.* Sin muſt needs expoſe a man to the

great diſlike and diſpleaſure of God, and make him vile in his Eyes: it makes us as unlike him as we can poſſibly be: It utterly deſtroys, ſo far as it prevails in us, the Image of God which is our greateſt Glory, and that by which alone we were very good. How can God regard that man with Favour who daily affronts him with willing habitual Sins? How can he view him with complacence and approbation who daily defiles himſelf? who preſents to his view in a wicked courſe of life nothing but what is moſt offenſive to the pure Eyes of his Glory.

But then it ſhould be well conſider'd by us whoſe diſpleaſure and anger it is that we incurr. 'Tis that of the Almighty God and the ſupream diſpoſer of all things; who can moſt eaſily revenge the affronts which we offer him when he will, who can afflict us as he pleaſes: 'tis he upon whom is our whole dependance for life and happineſs, without whoſe favour we can never be happy in this world or the next. The Sinner may divert and deceive himſelf with the ſenſible enjoyments of this world, while the divine Patience ſpares him, but he cannot be happy with theſe, they are but empty ſhadows or a meer dream of Felicity; they can give no content or ſatisfaction, nor have they any conſiderable ſweetneſs in them but when the favour of God beſtows and bleſſes them; and his favour which the wretched Sinner forfeits is better worth than all of them. This made the Pſalmiſt ſay, *that the light of his Countenance* afforded more joy, more hearty pleaſure and ſatisfaction, *than the increaſe*

of

of Corn and Wine, Pſal. 4. And then beſides we ſhould conſider too that 'tis God who does diſpoſe of our Eternal State, and makes us happy or miſerable for ever, according as we pleaſe or diſpleaſe him now. Such is he whoſe diſlike and hatred the Sinner does incurr and bring upon himſelf by his Sins.

3. We may from hence inferr too, the Sincerity and Truth of all the ſevereſt Threatnings of God againſt the Sins of Men. From theſe things we may juſtly fear and expect that he will certainly fulfil them, we may believe that he has really ſaid thoſe ſevere things, and that he means as they ſpeak. When we are told, *It ſhall not be well with the wicked*, Eccles. 8. 13. *That Evil purſueth Sinners*, Prov. 13. 21. that miſchief and Judgment haunt and follow them every where, mortal dangers ſurround and attend them conſtantly, vengeance watches over them continually: When we are told that *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh ſhall be upon every Soul that does Evil*, as in Rom. 2. 9. we ſee reaſon to believe theſe things, and to conclude that no Sinner can be ſafe or happy while he remains ſuch: that theſe threatnings ſhall be ſadly fulfill'd upon thoſe who ſhall be ſo hardy as to try the Truth of them.

But to ſpeak to this Inference the more Effectually I ſhall ſpeak more particularly: and therefore I ſhall add that God will take vengeance on the Sins of particular perſons (who are obſtinate and impenitent in this Life) in the Everlaſting Puniſhment of them in the other: this is that which he has threatned, and we may

juſtly expect he will do, upon this his great and juſt diſpleaſure againſt the Sins of men. Men are very willing and deſirous to believe, that the tranſient acts of their Wickedneſs, and the tranſgreſſions of a ſhort life ſhall not be revenged with ſo long Puniſhment, and are apt to flatter themſelves that after a while Divine Juſtice will relent, and give the Miſerable Priſoners in Hell a releaſe from their Torments: But thoſe that entertain ſuch hopes take very wrong meaſures both of the Evil and Provocation of Sin, and of the Wiſdom and Juſtice of God. It is certain and evident in Scripture that God has threatned everlaſting Puniſhment to the Sins of Men. In *Dan.* 12. 2. The Angel tells that Prophet, that *ſome ſhould riſe* again from the Dead *to Everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame and Everlaſting Contempt.* Our Saviour tells us that the Sentence upon wicked Men in the day of Judgment ſhall be, *depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, Matth. 25. 41. And in the laſt verſe of the Chapter he ſays of them, *Theſe ſhall goe away into Everlaſting Puniſhment.* the Apoſtle in 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 9. calls the puniſhment intended for ſuch Everlaſting deſtruction. And ſince in theſe and the like Scriptures, where the Fates of Good and Bad men are ſpoken of, the ſame phraſe and expreſſion is made uſe of concerning the duration both of the one and the other, we have as much reaſon to fear that the one will be Eternal, as to hope that the other will be ſo. Since the juſt and immutable God appears plainly to have declar'd that he will thus

thus puniſh the Sins of Men, it is the greateſt and moſt fooliſh preſumption to expect the contrary.

Eſpecially if we conſider too that which has been ſet before us concerning the Evil and Provocation of Sin: That 'tis the affront of an infinite Majeſty, contempt of our Maker, Rebellion againſt our Sovereign, and Ingratitude to a Friend; that it has nothing upon it of any impreſſion of any Attribute of God, but is the moſt unlike, the moſt contrary thing to him in the World. Upon theſe accounts ſure we might eaſily believe that he has an infinite Hatred and Diſpleaſure againſt it; and that ſince that diſpleaſure cannot be infinitely exerciſed upon a finite Being in the intenſeneſs of his Sufferings, it is but juſt in God to reſolve that they ſhall be Eternally continued: And though all Sins are not equal, that yet the puniſhment of all ſhall be of the ſame duration, becauſe the wiſe Juſtice of God can make a difference between ſeveral Sinners, in the different degree and intenſeneſs of their Sufferings. Beſides, though the Act of a Sin be ſhort and of but a moments duration, yet the guilt of it is a remaining and abiding thing. When once a ſinful Act is committed it remains done, and cannot be recall'd, and the Sinner remains guilty for ever, unleſs he obtains his pardon by timely repentance. And if repentance and the benefit of it be allow'd in Hell, that State could not be called Death and Deſtruction, as the Scripture uſually names it. But to conclude this particular, let us conſider, that God's having threatned

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ned everlasting Punishment in vain, is a great provocation to him to inflict it upon those that will not fear and avoid it. The threatning is a fair warning to Mankind, and a means fit and proper to make them avoid the Evil. The righteous God does not betray men into misery; he has told them the worst that shall be the consequent of their Sins. And shall he, after all, think this Punishment too great to be inflicted, when men do not think it great enough to be feared? Men chuse the vain Pleasures of Sin, which are but for a Season with the Eternal torments that follow, rather than a Life of Holiness and everlasting Happiness: And shall they not have then their own choise? Is there any wrong done them, or have they hard measure, when they were not at all imposed upon by God, and have but what they chose?

Application.

It is time now that I suggest what use we should make of these things: which I shall do briefly and conclude.

1. Let us take heed to our ways, and be very watchful over our selves, that we may avoid all that is sinful. It is fit to be our greatest concern and care, that which shall mingle it self with every other concern, and our constant endeavour that we cease from evil, and do good. It is certainly true what *Solomon* says, *Prov.* 28. 14. *Happy is the man that feareth always.* It is a very wise and happy thing to be always possest with a prudent care not to offend God: Who has all our Interests both in this World and the next, at his disposal; whose dis-

diſpleaſure can make us miſerable for ever, and in whoſe favour is life everlaſting. 'Tis our wiſdom and happineſs to take care that we may avoid ſo vile and ſo ill a thing as Sin, that which will ſo debaſe and pollute and diſparage us: To avoid that which our own Conſciences muſt often upbraid us for, what we muſt hereafter call our ſelves fools for, and will make us vile in our own Eyes, whenever we come to underſtand and conſider it.

2. What evil we have been guilty of for want of this care, Let us as it were undoe it again by a hearty Repentance. Shall we not mourn for ſo vile a thing as Sin! for having contracted the greateſt and moſt ſhameful diſparagement! for our having forfeited the everlaſting favour of God, and for having undone our ſelves? And may we not juſtly hate that which has ſo much ill and miſchief in it as this? May we not juſtly hate what God abhors? Should we not ſhew our love to him by hating what is ſo offenſive, and diſpleaſing to him? And then if we do ſincerely abhor the Ills we have done, we muſt forſake them for the future. A man can never contentedly go on in the courſe, that he himſelf does abhor. And let us conſider, to perſwade our ſelves to this Repentance, the encouragement that God has kindly given us to practice it. He has given us a promiſe of pardon if we will repent: Though our Sins are ſo highly diſpleaſing to him, though he ſo juſtly hates them, yet his infinite Mercy will forgive even the greateſt, and the greateſt number of them upon our unfeigned Repentance. *Let the wicked*

ed forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Iſa. 55. 7.

3. Laſtly, ſince we fly from ſo great and miſchievous an Evil as Sin is, and betake our ſelves to ſo much good and happineſs as infinite mercy beſtows, when we repent and return to our duty; we ſhould, as much as can be, haſten our Repentance, we ought in reaſon to admit of no delay in ſuch a matter. If this has been at all delay'd by any, it is too much. Why ſhould any man reſolve that he will be vile and baſe, that he will be odious to God, and obnoxious to his wrath but a little longer? This is a State not to be endured at all. Who can tell how long the divine Vengeance will delay? Who can aſſure himſelf that God will bear with him to the end of his delays? Can we too ſoon be ſafe? too ſoon be in favour with the Almighty? Can we too ſoon ceaſe to gather ſorrows, to heap up wrath, to provide wo and miſery for our ſelves? Or can we too ſoon live as beſt becomes us, as our reaſon and our everlaſting Intereſt require? and begin to treaſure up joys, to lay up rewards and happineſs for our ſelves? Theſe are things ſurely that cannot be done too ſoon. If there be good reaſon to forſake a wicked Life at all, 'tis unreaſonable in the leaſt to delay the doing ſo. When we come to condemn our ſelves in earneſt for our Sins, we ſhall condemn our ſelves too for continuing ſo long in them. Let us all then be able to ſay with *David*, at leaſt from this time. *I made haſt and delayed not, O Lord, to keep thy Commandments.* THE

THE PRAYER.

O Lord the eternal God, Creator and Owner, and Sovereign Lord of all things. By thee the Heavens were framed, and all the Hoſt of them by the breath of thy Mouth. Thou haſt made the Earth and the Sea, and all that is in them; and all that thou haſt made is thine: the World is thine, and the fulneſs thereof; all is of thee, and through and to thee. We who are now before thee here, are a ſmall handful of Creatures whom thou haſt brought into Being; from the Ground thou raiſeſt our living Bodies, and by thy mighty Power haſt formed the Spirit within us. And we, Lord, are thine, thy Right and Property, we are in nothing our own; our Tongues are not our own, our Thoughts are not our own, the Members of our Bodies, the Faculties of our Minds are not our own, but thou art Lord over us. We owe thee the entire Homage of our Souls and Bodies, which are thine, for we are thy People, O Lord, and the Sheep of thy Paſture. We are thoſe whom thou haſt oblig'd to Love and Honour thee by innumerable benefits. Thou haſt fed and clothed, and nouriſht and protected us, thou haſt given us all our Enjoyments, and thou holdeſt our Soul in Life. We humbly acknowledge, O Lord, thy Right in us; and we now own the Obligations thou haſt laid upon us. And we here preſent to thee our Bodies, to be a Holy and living Sacrifice, which is our juſt and moſt reaſonable Service; O Lord let us be accepted with thee through Jeſus Chriſt. We Confeſs that we have deſerved thou ſhouldeſt

ſhouldeſt reject and abhor us, who have been hitherto ſo little concern'd to pleaſe thee, who have ſo often and ſo exceedingly polluted our ſelves with that which is moſt odious and offenſive to thee. We are exceeding guilty and obnoxious to thy wrath and vengeance, in that we have been Rebels againſt thy Sovereignty over us: We have been unjuſt to thy Propriety in us: we have been ungrateful to thy Goodneſs towards us. We judge, we condemn, we abhor our ſelves for theſe things: O do not thou enter into Judgment with us, for in thy ſight ſhall no Man living be juſtifyed. We are heartily ſorry for all our miſ-doings, the remembrance of them is grievous to us, the burden of them is intollerable; but thou, O Lord, whoſe Property is always to have mercy, who haſt promiſed Forgiveneſs to all, that with a penitent Heart and true Faith in the Blood of Chriſt turn unto thee, have mercy upon us. Deal not with us after our Sins, neither reward us according to our Iniquities: Have mercy upon us, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy tender Compaſſions, and blot out all our Tranſgreſſions. We fly from thy Juſtice to the Footſtool of thy mercy, and there proſtrate our ſelves in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt. O Lord for his Sake forgive us all that is paſt, and grant that we may ever hereafter ſerve and pleaſe thee, in Newneſs and Holineſs of Life, to thy Honour and Glory. Do thou make us ſincere, in the Dedication of our ſelves again unto thee, in this renewal of our Reſolutions to ſerve thee. Create in us, O Lord, a clean Heart, and renew in us a right Spirit. Do thou make us to love thy Law, and to hate every falſe Way. Cauſe us without delay, to turn our Feet unto thy Teſtimonies, and make us to delight in the way of thy Teſtimonies more than in all Riches. O Lord, reſcue us we pray thee, from the Bonds of our Beloved, or habitual Sins; ſave and deliver us from the Pollutions of a wicked World; let us be blameleſs and harmleſs, the Children of God without rebuke, in

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the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation. Deliver us from all the Craft and Subtilty, and from all the fiery Darts of the wicked One: And let us never be hardened by the deceitfulneſs of any Sin.

We pray alſo, O Lord, for the Converſion of others, as well as of our ſelves. O Let thy Goſpel run and be Glorified, from the riſing of the Sun, to the going down of the ſame; and let many be turned from Darkneſs to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God. That the Dominion of the Enemy may be diminiſht, and the happy Kingdom of thy dear Son may be enlarged. We eſpecially pray for the good Eſtate of thy Catholick Church; that thou wouldeſt purge out of it, all that does offend thee, and Grant that all who profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians, may hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteouſneſs of Life. Look in Mercy upon theſe Nations to which we belong; forgive our crying Sins, and turn us from every evil way. Bleſs us with the continuance of pure Ordinances; and with a mighty Efficacy and Effect of them, for the promoting of Piety, Righteouſneſs, Charity and Sobriety amonſt us. Bleſs we pray thee, our moſt Gracious King and Queen, our Subordinate Magiſtrates, thoſe that Miniſter to thee in Holy things amongſt us, and all Ranks and Degrees of Men beſides; make us to fear thee, to depart from all Iniquity, to ſerve to thy Glory, and to the Happineſs and Welfare of each other, and defend us all from all foreign or domeſtick Enemies of our Peace. We commend alſo to thy infinite Mercies, all our Friends, Relations or Enemies: thoſe that have done us kindneſs, we pray thee, O Lord, abundantly to requite them, and thoſe that have done us any Injury, Father forgive them.

Let thy Word which we have this day heard, have power to ſanctifie and cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs. We humbly hope, for the mercy we have ſought of thee this Day, and deſire we may commit our

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ſelves to thy careful and gracious Providence this Night and for evermore. Lord bleſs and keep us, lift up the Light of thy Countenance, and guide us by thy Counſel, till thou haſt brought us to thy Glory. All we humbly ask upon the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt, beſeeching thee to hear us for his Sake, and further in his own Words ſaying,

Our Father, &c.

THE

The MEANNESS of THIS PRESENT LIFE

Prov'd and Apply'd.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Job 14. 2.

He cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down; he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow and continueth not.

TO know who it is that theſe words of *Job* do deſcribe in ſo mean and diſparaging a Character, we need but look back to the firſt verſe of this Chapter, where we ſhall find he is ſpeaking of Man. It is man that

Cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down; He *fleeth as a ſhadow and continueth not.* It was his deſign to repreſent by this Expreſſion, the contemptible and wretched Condition of our preſent Life, which we very fooliſhly and unreaſonably dote upon and admire.

This Life on Earth was never intended to be our happieſt State; and by reaſon of the Sin of Mankind, it is fallen much below that degree of Happineſs, which the Creatour had intended it ſhould enjoy. Yet this pitiful State is that the wretched Sons of Men are moſt extreamly fond of. Here they would always be; this takes up all their Thoughts and Care. They know, or at leaſt mind no Heaven, but Earth; and think to heap up felicity as they gather worldly Enjoyments. We ſtudy how to live happily till we die, and dote upon fading Pleaſures, as if we were always to enjoy them. We commonly live here as if after this Life we were to be no longer, and there were no better things attainable than what this Life poſſeſſes. And while we mind this World, we neglect the other; we do not ſeek the better Happineſs of that, and loſe it for want of ſeeking it: Yea, we forfeit that Happineſs which is to come, and deſerve, and incur everlaſting Miſery, by what our too great love of this Life, and its Enjoyments does engage us in. Very much of the wickedneſs of this World, and the miſery of the next is due to this unhappy Cauſe. To render a temporal Life happy, as we ſuppoſe we ſpoil an Eternal one, or incur an Eternal Death; we ſerve our Bodies to the Deſtruction of our Souls.

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The great Folly of which our Saviour ſuggeſts by that Queſtion, *Mark* 8. 36. *What ſhall it profit a man if he ſhall gain the whole World and loſe his Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?*

To meet with this unhappy and dangerous Errour, as much as this Text without ſtraining it will allow, I ſhall employ the following Diſcourſe about three things.

1. I ſhall enquire and make it appear from other Scriptures, what intimations concerning our preſent Life this Text affords us.

2. I ſhall inſiſt a little upon the Illuſtration of thoſe Intimations.

3. I ſhall add the due Improvement and Application of them.

In the firſt place, let us compare this Text of Scripture with others, that we may derive from it the more certainly and evidently the Inſtructions it contains. In 1 *Pet.* 1. 24. 'tis ſaid, *All fleſh is as graſs, and all the glory of man as the flower of graſs: The graſs withereth, and the flower falleth away.* And in the next verſe he adds, *But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* By this oppoſition of the Word that endureth to the Graſs, and the Flower of it which falleth away, we may underſtand, that by the Compariſon of a Flower the Holy Spirit would teach us this Life is not of long continuance: The Flower is the ſhorteſt liv'd part even of thoſe Plants that have the ſhorteſt duration, and is upon that account fit to mind us of the ſhort continuance of this preſent Life. Further, in *Pſ.* 103. *v.* 15, 16. we are told, *As for man his days are as graſs, as*

a Flower of the Field, ſo he flouriſheth; For the wind paſſeth over it, and it is gone. This ſhort liv'd Flower is expoſed as the Flower of the Field, 'tis liable to many deſtructive and mortal Accidents; yea, if but the Wind paſſes over it, it is gone, 'tis moſt eaſily deſtroyed, 'tis a thing may look fair and beautiful, but has very little ſtrength. Thus it is with Man is the Pſalmiſts meaning here: He is as feeble as the Flower of the Field, a ſmall miſchief may ſnatch him away in his prime. Thus the Scripture teaches by this compariſon the frailty and weakneſs, as well as the ſhortneſs of human Life. Again, in *Pſal.* 102. v. 11. the Pſalmiſt ſpeaking of himſelf ſays, *My days are like a ſhadow that declineth*, which is as if he had ſaid, while my afflictions laſt, and I hope for better days, my Life declines apace, it wafts continually away. In *Pſal.* 144. v. 4. 'tis ſaid, *Man is like to Vanity, his days are as a ſhadow that paſſeth away.* From theſe Scriptures we may learn, that by the Compariſon of a Shadow is taught us how tranſitory our preſent Life is; It is continually paſſing away, and ſpending it ſelf. And the rather may we be allow'd to conclude this from our preſent Text, becauſe 'tis ſaid of Man, *He fleeth as a ſhadow*, and then 'tis added too, *He continueth not.* From this Text then it appears, we may learn theſe three ſerious Intimations.

1. The preſent Life of mortal Man is very ſhort as is the continuance of a Flower.

2. It is very feeble and frail; is moſt eaſily cut off and deſtroyed, and yet is expoſed too, as the Flower of the Field.

3. It

3. This our preſent Life in this World is altogether tranſitory, it is continually paſſing away: As a ſhadow always moves and paſſes on, till it is loſt in the Nights Univerſal Darkneſs.

Theſe are very obvious Truths, and ſuch as every Man's thoughts may eaſily ſuggeſt to him. And they are very important and worth our conſidering, and would be to thoſe that would well conſider them the Springs of much Peace and Wiſedom. But as obvious and uſeful as they are, it appears they are much neglected, and men commonly live as if they knew not theſe things: At leaſt 'tis certain they ſeldom or never conſider them. Let us then not be unwilling to fix our minds upon them for a little while at preſent; and let none fear any harm will follow, if thereby they ſhould make impreſſion upon his mind, and for the future ſo ſtay there as never to be forgotten again.

The next thing then, that I propoſed to do is to illuſtrate theſe particulars; to expreſs and ſpeak of them in a few more words, on purpoſe that our Thoughts may be detained a while upon them, and that we may give them ſome advantage to make a due Impreſſion.

1. Let us conſider that the preſent Life of morral Man is very ſhort. They that live the greateſt Number of Years, have but a ſhort Life on Earth. A little time paſſes over the Innocence and Eaſe of our Infancy and Childhood: A little more withers the flouriſhing

Beauty and Gayety of Youth: A little more weakens the Strength, and ſpends the Uſefulneſs of riper Manhood. And if beyond this we live, a little time more buries the decays and infirmities of Old-age. The longeſt diſtance from the Cradle to the Grave is but a ſhort one. And the Wiſedom of God would have Mankind ſenſible of this; therefore it is often ſuggeſted to us in Scripture. This Chapter, *verſ.* 1. ſays, *Man that is born of a Woman is of few days: Few and evil* (ſays *Jacob*) *have the days of the years of my Life been*; after he had lived an hundred and thirty Years, *Gen.* 47. 9. Well then might the Pſalmiſt ſay, *If our ſtrength laſts to fourſcore years, yet it is ſoon cut off*, as *Pſal.* 90. 10. But we ſhall have the beſt and moſt lively apprehenſion of the contemptible ſhortneſs of human Life, if we compare the continuance of that with the duration of ſome other things. There are many of the Creatures made inferiour to us, that yet now commonly live much longer than we. Naturaliſts tell us, that ſome ſorts of Birds commonly live an hundred years; when, alas, not one in many hundreds of us can reach to near that Age. Of ſome Trees it is ſaid, they will live Eight hundred years. Many of our own Works abide and continue much longer than we. We contrive them for our own advantage and comfort, and in a little time leave them we know not to whom. We live in Houſes, we meet in Churches, that were built by we know not who, we read Books written by men that have been dead perhaps many hundred years ago. If we conſider the more abiding parts

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of the Creation; how much longer do they laſt than we, whom they were made to ſerve. *One generation goes and another comes* (ſays the Preacher) *but the Earth abides for ever.* The expreſſion does not mean that this Earth ſhall never be diſſolv'd, and there are other Scriptures which intimate that it ſhall, but it teaches us that while the Earth abides, and has done ſo for ſeveral thouſands of years, a great many generations of men have ſucceſſively been upon it. For a while it has fed, and then devoured them: A while they have had a portion here, and then reſigned it to others, and they after a little while have reſigned it again to others; no man can carry any of theſe things away with him. How many lives has the Courſe of this one Sun meaſured, and yet the Sun continues to run his Race. Above five Thouſand years has that bright Creature been a burning and ſhining Light, when alas *we are but as of yeſterday*; as *Job* ſpeaks, *Job* 8.9. And how much longer after us the Earth, and the Sun, and the Heavens may laſt we know not. But if they ſhould laſt much longer, (as we have reaſon to think they will not laſt always) there are yet another ſort of Beings of a longer duration. The Angels which were made above five Thouſand years ago, ſhall continue for ever; they ſhall know no end of duration, nor alteration of their bleſt and happy condition: Their duration is not tranſitory, their condition is not frail and feeble. But in the laſt place, let us conſider the infinite and everlaſting Duration of the Ever-bleſſed God. *He is from everlaſting*

to everlaſting, as is ſaid Pſal. 90. 2. He always was and never had beginning, always is and ſhall be, and never ſhall be at an end. Oh how juſtly may we deſpiſe (conſidering theſe things) the contemptible ſhortneſs of our preſent Life. The Pſalmiſt ſays to God, *A thouſand years in thy ſight are but as yeſterday* when it is paſt. Which is as if he ſhould ſay, If we wretched mortals ſhould be continued in this world for a longer time than any of the firſt men liv'd, who liv'd ſome of them near a thouſand years, yet this were very little to thy unmeaſurable duration. The longeſt Life of man is as inconſiderable to thee as one paſt day is to us. Yea it is as little as a watch in the night; he adds, as three or four hours ſpent in ſleep. And very fitly is this matter expreſt yet further, to make us duely ſenſible of it, Pſal. 39. 5. *Behold my days are as an hand-breadth.* The four ſhort Stages of mans life are but each of them as it were the breadth of a finger in their length; and yet further; *Mine age is as nothing before thee*: The greateſt number of our years is ſo ſmall it is as nothing when compar'd with thy eternal duration. Thus we may help our ſelves duely to apprehend the ſhortneſs of our preſent life.

2. Let us conſider that this our preſent Life is very frail and feeble. As the Flower is the ſhorteſt liv'd part of a plant, ſo 'tis uſually the weakeſt, the moſt eaſily withered and deſtroyed. A cold wind pinches and blaſts it, a high one tears it in pieces; a hot Sun ſhrivels and withers it; a little fly or worm can eaſily deſtroy a thing of ſo delicate and tender a conſtitution. And ſo frail

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as this is the life of man: There is not the weakeſt Flower more weak than he. the ſtrongeſt man may be kill'd by a fly or an hair, a crum of bread, a blaſt of ill air, or a few drops of drink. Even the weakeſt and moſt contemptible Creature that is, can put an end to his days when 'tis commiſſioned by the Providence of God to do ſo And we are liable to a great many mortal accidents, any of which can cut us off in the prime of our years when we are proud of youth and ſtrength: As *Job* ſays, *ſome die in their full ſtrength, when their breaſts are full of milk, and their bones are moiſtned with morrow*, Job 21.23,24. Our greateſt ſtrength is but weakneſs. How often has the Sun riſen upon a man alive and well, and promiſing himſelf many days, and before his ſetting has ſeen him a dead carkaſs? Again; We may apprehend the frailty of our preſent life from hence, we all breed in our ſelves the Cauſes of death. A great many diſtempers are our mortal bodies liable to, and we carry the ſeeds of them in our ſelves. And we may ſay there are ſome diſeaſes which the exceſs of health and vigour diſpoſe men to, ſome that kill only the young or ſtrong, as a conſumption or a feaver. But that conſtitution muſt needs be acknowledged frail which breeds its own deſtruction; and this is the common caſe of mankind in our preſent ſtate. And yet further will the frailty of this life be preſented to us if we conſider the unavoidable decays of old age. If without accidents and in ſpite of diſtempers we paſs through childhood and youth and manhood; yet in old age nature decaies of its ſelf. It nothing

thing elſe deſtroy us we ſhall like the weak flower fade, and fall alone. The crazy building may be propt a while, but it will tumble at laſt let what will de done to ſupport it. And this ought ſure to be reckon'd a very frail thing which will fall of it ſelf, and periſh if it be let alone. And much rather yet ſhould we account it ſo if it will fail and periſh, notwithſtanding the greateſt care and the beſt means that can be uſed to preſerve it. And this is the miſerable condition of our preſent life.

3. Let us further take notice and conſider that this preſent life is altogether tranſitory. The life of man fleeth as a ſhadow and continueth not. We may think it ſtays with us but it does not, it continually paſſes away. Every ſhadow is in continual motion, as the Sun that makes it does conſtantly move. And ſo this ſhort life is continually paſſing away; it never makes one moments ſtop. And ſurely that which is but ſhort, and yet is continually paſſing, muſt needs be quickly done; *we have here no continuing city*, the Sripture tells us, Heb. 13. 14. *we are but pilgrims and ſtrangers on Earth*, Heb. 11. 13. We cannot have here a ſettled abiding State. That we may the better apprehend how tranſitory our life is, let us fix our Eye ſometimes, or our thoughts at preſent upon a rapid and violent Stream. As in a river one wave thruſts on another, and while we look on, ſtill new water ſucceeds to our view; ſo one year, one day, one moment thruſts on and ſucceeds another. This day will not ſtay with us any more than all that are gone before it. Let

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us conſider that whatever we are doing life ſpends and waſts it ſelf; precious time is ſpent whatever elſe we ſave or get. While we work, while we ſleep life goes on; if we are buſie, if we are idle, it will not ſtay for us but paſſes away. Our Life paſſes like a ſhadow with a very ſilent and unheeded pace, but a very ſteady and conſtant one. And thus indeed it comes to paſs that it ſteals away from a great many of us. It is gone ere we are aware of it. While we are promiſing our ſelves what we will do for our own advantage and comfort hereafter, while we are expecting what the *time to come* will do for us, the *time to come* is ſome of it come and gone; *this time to come* grows every day leſs and leſs. Time flies away, we cannot hold it, and when 'tis gone will never be recall'd. We can neither keep it with us nor bring it back again All the art and skill of Philoſophy and Phyſick is not able to make an old man young. We may redeem time by a wiſe and diligent improvement of that we have, but can never recall it. And that muſt needs be reckon'd a very tranſitory thing, which is always ſpending and paſſing and will never recover or return. This Life we ſhall never live over again when it is once gone, this we cannot hope for; tho' we may hope for or fear another.

I think enough is now ſaid to illuſtrate the three particulars contain'd in our Text. I ſhall therefore proceed in the laſt place to mention and urge the Improvement and Uſe we ought to make of them. This I ſhall divide into two parts, to direct our behaviour hereby both towards

wards this world and the next. For ſome Important Inſtructions regarding both may be deriv'd from theſe particulars.

Let us ſee firſt what behaviour they require of us relating to this world. This you may obſerve in the following particulars.

1. Since the caſe is thus with us in this World, it ſhould make our deſires towards all things here very moderate and regular. It cannot be worth our while to be very much concern'd about matters that we ſhall not long have any thing to do with. It is very fooliſh to let our Thoughts abide and fix where we our ſelves cannot. Since this life is frail, and ſhort, and yet tranſitory too, this utterly forbids us to engage all our thoughts about it, to let it employ all our care; to ſuffer all our wiſhes and endeavours and our whole Soul to purſue any thing here. It forbids an eager and uneaſie concern for any thing that we have not. 'Tis unreaſonable to pine and grieve much for the want of that which I could but a little while enjoy. Since we cannot poſſeſs any of theſe things but a very little while, we muſt be long without them; and ſhould content and ſatisfie our ſelves that we may not be uneaſie under an inevitable neceſſity. Say to your ſelf; If I cannot be a few days without ſuch a thing, How ſhall I do to be many years without it; as I muſt be all the while that my Body ſhall lie in the Grave, and my Soul be ſeparated from this world? How ſhall I bear to be for ever without it, as I muſt be when all this world ſhall be diſſolved, and the enjoyments of it at an end? This further forbids

bids all our anxiety and ſollicitude about the time to come, ſome hardly enjoy what they are and have at preſent by reaſon of their care and fear about what may be hereafter. The time to come cannot be a long time when 'tis but part of a ſhort life. And let every man think with himſelf; while I am ſollicitous about the remainder of my days, they grow ſtill fewer and fewer, and ſo I have ſtill the leſs reaſon for my care about them.

Further, this ſhould effectually reſtrain men from all ill ways of ſeeking the conveniences of this preſent life. We deſire That too much, whatever is it, that we reſolve to obtain by any means All the happineſs this world can afford, is not worthy of ſuch a deſire. And he pays too dear for the beſt enjoyments of this world who purchaſes them at the coſt of his Innocence. *Treaſures gotten by wickedneſs profit not*; He that allows himſelf to be wicked that he may accompliſh his deſires loſes much to gain a little; He forfeits the true happineſs to gain a falſe one: For tranſitory ſatisfactions he abdicates abiding pleaſures. He loſes Eternal goods to gain Temporal; and incurs everlaſting miſery for the ſake of a very ſhort and tranſient and ſmall felicity. What proportion can there be between the joys of Heaven, which are moſt pure and raviſhing, moſt ſatisfying and eternal, and the ſhort flaſhes of delight and pleaſure which this world affords? Or what recompence can theſe feeble and ſhort pleaſures make for the expoſing our ſelves to the moſt exquiſite and eternal torments; Nothing then can be ſo fooliſh and unreaſonable

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as the guilty purſuit of the things of this world.

2. The ſhortneſs and frailty of this preſent Life may teach us to uſe with ſobriety and temperance the Enjoyments of this World. A quite contrary uſe I know is made of this Conſideration by too many, but how abſurdly and fooliſhly will appear upon a very little conſideration. They allow themſelves the moſt exceſſive gratifications of their appetites in Gluttony, Drunkenneſs and Uncleanneſs: yea they endeavour and ſtudy to enflame their Appetites, and make them immoderate and exceſſive that they may have the more pleaſure in gratifying them; and becauſe they can live but a little while they will *live apace.* But unleſs the way were a great deal longer to the Grave than it is, methinks there is no need to hurry thither. There is no reaſon to live out a ſhort life apace. Thus they ſhorten the life which would not be very long without this precipitant haſt. They drive away that which they would keep, and which is going away of it ſelf. They make haſt to put an end to that which above all things they dote upon, that is, ſenſual pleaſure; to diſable themſelves from enjoying it by diſeaſes or an untimely death. Intemperance and exceſs brings the infirmities and aches and defects of old Age upon Youth, and kill men in the prime of their days, almoſt as ſoon as they come to enjoy the world and know what it is to live. Is this the wit of the world, or rather a madneſs? A wiſe man would uſe with care a frail and brittle thing, eſpecially if he does highly eſteem and value it.

it. Is it reaſonable to wiſh for a long enjoyment of the pleaſures of this Life, and to take a courſe at the ſame time to make it ſhort? to dote on pleaſures and ſpoil them? to place all our happineſs in this life and make haſt to end it? to be prodigal of a ſmall Stock; and uſe ruggedly and careleſly a weak thing? If this be Wit there is nothing can deſerve the name of Folly.

3. Theſe diſparaging properties of this preſent life ſhould teach men to be humble in their greateſt worldly proſperity. It may and ought to ſerve to this purpoſe to conſider: Whatever I have now it is but a little while agoe that I receiv'd it: Naked I came not long ſince into this world. I have but a very little while been honour'd, or rich, or learned; and ere long I muſt ceaſe to be what I am. I muſt goe out of this world quickly, and go as naked (at leaſt of all outward advantages) as I was when I came into it. All that I have then here is but a tranſitory portion, my beſt eſtate is Vanity, which is built upon ſo ſlight a foundation as this feeble Life. Alas, I cannot have here a ſtable abiding felicity while my life is moving and paſſing away. And if I can enjoy what I have till I die, that is the longeſt I ſhall do ſo, and that cannot be long. Then the poor Begger will be as rich as the moſt wealthy: And there will be as much beauty, as much ſtrength in his duſt who was deform'd and weak, as in that of thoſe who are proud of beauty, or ſtrength; no marks of Wiſdom or Learning will remain about the Dead and corrupted Carkaſs. All ſorts are huddled together, equall'd and con-

canfounded in the Grave. The man that is proud of his preſent advantages may aſſure himſelf that within a few days he may be as deſpicable on earth as any that he deſpiſes. Yea in a little time he ſhall be more deſpicable and made inferiour to him if the other outlives him. If the rich and honour'd dies firſt, the poor man remains richer and more honourable than he: As *a living Dog is better than a dead Lion.* The one enjoys ſtill his little, the other is totally ſtript of his abundance. Should I deſpiſe any man (let me ſay) when a little time may make ſo great a difference to his advantage; When he whom I diſdain perhaps to ſpeak to may ſhortly tread upon me, and have me under the duſt of his feet Surely this frail and tranſitory life with all its advantages is too mean a thing to cauſe or allow a man to be proud of it.

4. Theſe conditions of our preſent Life may juſtly render us patient under all preſent Adverſity. May we not with great reaſon bear that Patiently which we cannot endure long; eſpecially when the more patient we are under grievous things, the more eaſie and tolerable they be. Let us conſider then, when any Affliction befalls us, I cannot undergo a long affliction in a ſhort life. If poverty be my Lot, I ſhall not long be expos'd to the inconveniences of that. If I am condemned to a life of hard labour and toil; I may comfort my ſelf with this thought, that I am haſting to a place where the *weary are at reſt.* If I am vex'd and affl cted by the Luſts and Paſſions of unreaſonable and wicked men; I may conſider their

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Life is frail and transitory as well as mine; and I am going to be where *the wicked ceaſe from troubling.* In all adverſity this may comfort us, my afflictions are fading and tranſitory, as I am; the evils as well as the good things of this Life, can laſt no longer than my ſelf, and that will not be long.

Such as theſe are the Thoughts, Diſpoſitions, and Reſolutions relating to this World, that theſe conditions of our preſent Life ſhould excite in us. The Apoſtle *Paul* urges ſuch a uſe of theſe things, 1 *Cor.* 7. 29, 30, 31. *Brethren the time is ſhort, It remains that they which have Wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that uſe this world as not abuſing it, for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.*

I proceed now to the laſt part of the Diſcourſe with which I ſhall ſoon conclude, that is, to repreſent the due Behaviour relating to the other World, which theſe diſparagements of our preſent Life ſhould teach and provoke us to.

And I cannot imagine but that every one will readily acknowledge, theſe things ſhould make us turn our thoughts towards the World to come, and look into the reality and nature of a future State; and earneſtly endeavour to ſecure to our ſelves a happy condition there. Since there is moſt certainly another World, and a Life to come; is it not our Wiſdom to think of it, and look before us: eſpecially when we are continually haſting to it? When I am

going apace from this World, ſhall I not think at all whither I am going? Is not this worth a thought? Let us conſider what the Scripture teaches us of the Future State: That it aſſures our Souls to be immortal; though our Bodies periſh *they* ſhall never die; and our periſhing Bodies ſhall lie but a while in their diſſolved State: They ſhall certainly riſe again from the duſt to live hereafter in immortal Life: That we ſhall be raiſed to receive the rewards of our doings here, whether they have been good or evil: That the Eternal world to come is divided into two different States, the one perfectly happy for the reward of good men, the other perfectly miſerable for the puniſhment of the bad. Since theſe things will certainly be, let us certainly expect them and frequently think of them; Let every one often tell himſelf, this ſhort Life is haſting to end in an endleſs Life. I am going where I ſhall be happy or miſerable for ever; from tranſitory to abiding things, from temporal to eternal. Whatever puts an end to this frail Life, which is ſo eaſily deſtroyed, ſends me into an unalterable State, whatever ſort it be of: If a happy one, it will ever be happy and perfectly ſo; if miſerable, it will always be a perfectly miſerable State. And my condition there will be ordered according to my behaviour here, this ſhort Life has an influence upon the Eternal one. If I have lived well, and well uſed the Talents I was entruſted with here; I ſhall enjoy better and more laſting good things there. I may juſtly content my ſelf to be denyed any of theſe things below,

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if the wiſe diſpoſer ſees fit to do ſo; ſince better things to full ſatisfaction are reſerved for me. But if I live wickedly, I muſt expect that a little time will put an end for ever to all my preſent eaſe and proſperity; I muſt part with all my lov'd Enjoyments, and bid a farewell to all mirth and pleaſure. All my portion of good is in this World, and I can enjoy it no longer than while this ſhort and tranſitory Life laſts. It is but a ſmall portion of good then that falls to my ſhare, if this be all I muſt have. And it was not worth the being born, to be expoſed to ſo many evils, to bear ſo many afflictions, to feel the wrackings of ſo many violent paſſions, as this mortal Life and vale of Tears are acquainted with, for the ſake of enjoying ſo little good, ſo ſhort and ſmall a felicity. And beſides, my pleaſant Circumſtances here, will quickly end in Torments and Miſeries that will continue for ever. Let us I ſay, think much of that other World, and divert our thoughts from this: That ſo our affections may be diſengaged, and we may not be entangled with the Charms and Allurements of this World, to our everlaſting perdition. And having got our ſelves at liberty from thoſe fatal ſnares and fetters; let us earneſtly apply our ſelves to prepare for, and ſecure a happy State in the Life to come. This ought to be our greateſt care in this World, and employ the moſt of our endeavours. In every other care and endeavour this ſhould be minded, and ſhould direct them. We ſhould ſo purſue this World as at the ſame time to purſue a better, and ſo enjoy this World as that we at

the ſame time may hope for a better. Ought we not to be moſt concerned that we may be happy there, where we muſt be longeſt. Let us behave our ſelves always in this World, as going out of this and going into another, where we ſhall abide and ſtay. Shall we be carefull about a few days to come of this Life, and not much rather be ſolicitous what ſhall become of us to all Eternity.

Now to ſecure our happineſs hereafter, we muſt endeavour to make our peace with God, to regain his favour by repenting truly of our former Sins, by ſtedfaſtly purpoſing to lead a new Life, by devoting our ſelves to Jeſus Chriſt to be followers of him, with whom the Father was well-pleaſed. We muſt then *deny all angodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World.* We muſt ceaſe to do evil and learn to do well; and follow after holineſs, without which no man can ſee God, no man can be admitted into that preſence of God which makes Heaven. Let us endeavour to grow reconciled to a very ſerious and religious Life; to become acquainted with, and to reliſh the joys and pleaſures of devotion and communion with God: To delight in him in meditating on his Nature and Works, in praiſing, adoring and worſhipping of him. Which things will be the great entertainment and happineſs of Heaven; and therefore till we are ſuited to ſuch things, till we can find the higheſt pleaſure in them, and in all acts of Vertue, till we can ſatisfie our ſelves in ſuch things, even with the want of many worldly Enjoyments, we

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are not fit for Heaven, nor can be happy in another World.

But thus to prepare our ſelves for, and ſecure a happy State hereafter, is the beſt uſe we can poſſibly put this our mean Life to. And though this Life be ſo ſhort and tranſitory, we ſhall have time enough for the ſecuring a better, if we do not cheat our ſelves of it by unneceſſary delays, and if we apply our ſelves diligently to this matter. And how great an Improvement of our preſent Life is this! How great a gain! How much to advantage! To employ this Life for the gaining a happy one hereafter, is as if a man ſhould lay out Pebbles for Pearls, ſhould exchange Dirt for Gold, and ſhort liv'd Sparkles for laſting and glorious Stars. 'Tis to lay out Earth for Heaven, to ſpend time for the purchaſe of Eternity; to uſe the Creatures ſo, as to make them bring us to God; to labour for a very few days, that we may enjoy an Eternal reſt; to deny our ſelves in a few things, and for a little while, that we may ere long enjoy full ſatisfactions, everlaſting pleaſures. This is truly and greatly to redeem our time: This if we do, we ſhall not regret that our time on Earth was ſo ſhort and tranſitory.

THE PRAYER.

O Eternal and Almighty God, thou art always the ſame, and thy years do not fail, thou art the ſame yeſterday, and to day and for ever, without Variableneſs or ſhadow of Change. It is upon thee, O Lord, and thy unchangeable Power, that all things elſe do depend, in their Beings and in all their Operations; thou filleſt Heaven and Earth, and thou workeſt all in all. All thy Works praiſe thee, O God, and thy Saints bleſs thee: The inviſible Things of thee are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even thy Eternal power and Godhead. And we, O Lord, are amongſt the number of thoſe whom thou haſt Created, and doſt preſerve; thou in thy due time, didſt bring us into Being at our Birth, and by thee we are hitherto ſuſtained. It is thou that ſupporteſt our frail Natures, that they fall not into the Duſt; by thy careful Providence over us, we have eſcaped many Dangers, we have got through the weakneſs of Infancy, and the Heedleſneſs of Childhood; by thy Bleſſing has our Food nouriſht, and our Cloaths warmed us, for we live not by theſe things alone, but by the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. We are in thy Hands then, O thou the Sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death: when ever thou pleaſeſt, we return to the Duſt from whence we were Created. We acknowledge it is of thy Mercy that we are not conſumed, and becauſe thy Compaſſions fail not. And we are afraid, when we think how eaſily thou canſt cruſh and deſtroy us, how frail our Life is, and how ſhort and Tranſitory, how little a diſtance we are from Eternity, and how expoſed our Lives are, how many Evils and Dangers compaſs

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us about, and how ſmall a Matter is able to put an end to our Days: Theſe things when we conſider them, make us look upon our ſelves as always juſt at the brink of the Grave and Eternity. And while we have liv'd careleſs of our Duty to thee, while we have liv'd in Rebellion againſt thee, we have been upon the brink of Hell, and in continual Danger of falling into it. Had thy wrath been kindled againſt us but for a moment, which we have continually provoked, we had periſht irrecoverably. Oh how great and wonderful is thy Patience and Goodneſs in continuing, and ſupporting and watching over ſuch provoking Sinners! We admire, we praiſe thee for thy Long-ſuffering towards us; and ſince thou haſt given ſpace to do it, we repent of all our paſt Sins, we purpoſe and deſire to lead a new and good Life, and we humbly ſue for thy pardoning Mercy. When we with Sorrow and Shame confeſs our Sins, do thou, we pray thee, forgive our Sins, and cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs. Give us a true and unfeigned Repentance, and the Grace to amend our Lives according to thy Holy word. Teach us that denying all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we may live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World, ſpending the reſt of our Days to thy Honour and Glory. In this way make us to ſeek an Inheritance in the World to come, that ſince we have here no long abode, no certain Duration, no abiding State, we may have a Treaſure in Heaven, an Inheritance in the next World that fadeth not away. Make us ſo ſenſible of the ſhort and uncertain condition of this our preſent Life, that our Affections may be wean'd from this World, and ſet upon the things to come; teach and inable us ſo to paſs through things Temporal that we finally loſe not the things that are Eternal.

We pray thee, let not this day be utterly loſt to us, but give us Comfort and good Fruit of our Attendances upon thee; O Let thy Ordinances be to us, the means of a Glorious and Eternal Life. Grant us

to lie down this Night in Peace, while thou makeſt us to dwell ſafely: Let our waking Thoughts in the Night-ſeaſon inſtruct us. Give us cauſe in the Morning to rejoyce in thy Goodneſs, and Lord Comfort this our wretched mortal Life with thy Bleſſings, let us ſee thy Goodneſs in the Land of the Living.

We beſeech thee, to have mercy upon all Men; Grant them to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent to their eternal Salvation. Save thy People, O Lord, and bleſs thine heritage, govern and lift them up for ever. We pray thee, Bleſs theſe Nations wherein we live, be thou as a Wall of Fire round about us, and our defence againſt all thine Enemies and ours; O purge and cleanſe us from our Sins, that we may be meet for the Favours of thy Providence. Grant our King and Queen a long and happy Reign over us, give them great Proſperity and Peace. Direct all our Magiſtrates, ſo to govern themſelves in their ſeveral places, as may be to thy Glory, the good of thy Church among us, and to the Safety, Honour and Welfare of their Majeſties and their Kingdoms. Teach all our People duely to fear thee, to be ſubject and obedient to thoſe that are over them in Church or State, and to live in brotherly Love and Unity one among another. We humbly recommend to thy Goodneſs, O Father of Mercies, all that are in any Trouble or Affliction, give them Patience and Submiſſion to thee, and in due time deliver them. We pray thee bleſs all our Friends and Relations, do good to our Enemies, and make them to be at Peace with us: All this we humbly ask in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt; and further whatever he himſelf hath taught us to pray, ſaying,

Our Father, &c.

The

The USEFULNESS of EARLY RELIGION TO Old-Age, *demonſtrated.*

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

ECCLES. 12. 1.

Remember now thy Creatour in the days of thy Youth, while the Evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them.

NOtwithſtanding the great uncertainty of humane Life, and though none of us can tell how ſhort his appointed time may be: Though we ſee perſons of every Age

Age deſcend into the Grave, ſome in their early Infancy, and ſome in Youth in their full ſtrength, as well as ſome in an old Age: Yea, (which is very ſtrange) though we ſee that a great many more die young, than there are that live to any great Age; yet do Mankind commonly promiſe themſelves a long Life on Earth. All expect this almoſt, though but few attain it. We believe that we may live as long as the oldeſt Perſons that we ſee or know. And this vain Imagination proves a fatal and miſchievous ſnare to a great many. For, becauſe they may live long, as they think, they will not trouble themſelves betimes to prepare to die, though it is as true that they may not live long. They ſet the practice of Religion and the concern of their Souls aſide for the preſent, becauſe they ſhall have, as they ſuppoſe, time enough to mind them hereafter. They apply themſelves wholly now to the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of this Life, and refer their Reformation and Religion to old Age. And thus while they think they have much time to ſpend, they ſquander away, and loſe much from their main concern; and with their time they loſe Eternity, and their Souls too: Their time is ſpent, and their Day of Salvation is over, before they have ſecured and wrought out their Salvation: And Death ſnatches many of them away in the midſt of their worldly Cares and Pleaſures, and ſo they are undone for ever.

To meet with and cure, if it may be, this Errour, I ſhall inſiſt a little upon theſe words of *Solomon*: Wherein he intimates the Unreaſonableneſs

bleneſs and Folly of delaying to repent, and be religious, till old Age, though it be ſuppoſed that we may, or though it could be certain that we ſhall live to old Age. We may reckon that the latter part of this *verſe* is a reaſon and argument to enforce his advice in the former part of it; and that his meaning is this. *Remember now thy Creatour in the days of thy Youth*, becauſe the latter end of a long Life will be *Evil days*, and ſuch as you ſhall ſay, *I have no pleaſure in them*. To be religious in youth will be the beſt preparation againſt the evil days to come, and in thoſe days you will need thoſe conſolations and advantages, which a religious and vertuous Courſe that has been before them will then afford. Many other arguments are commonly inſiſted upon by thoſe that handle this Text, to perſuade young Perſons to mind Religion and Vertue; but I ſhall ſet them all aſide and inſiſt upon this alone, which ſeems chiefly, if not only intended in the Text. To do this with the better ſucceſs (if it may pleaſe God) I ſhall divide the following Diſcourſe into three parts.

1. To ſhew what is meant by *Remembring our Creatour in the days of our Youth:* Becauſe 'tis uſually thought that Youth may be allowed a great deal of liberty, and that a very little Religion may ſerve their turn.

2. To ſhew that the time of old Age is That he means here by the *Evil days*, and the years in which a Man ſhall ſay, he has *no pleaſure in them*; for to illuſtrate this matter is to ſtrengthen the Argument.

3. To

3. To ſhew how this is a good argument and reaſon againſt mens putting off their repenting and being religious to their old Age; and that the beſt Defence and Preparation that we can poſſibly make againſt the Inconveniences of that time, is to be religious in our Youth.

I begin with the firſt of theſe: To ſhew what is meant by *Remembring our Creatour in the days of our Youth.*

By Creatour then we are to underſtand, he means God that made us; for it is He *that hath made us, and not we our ſelves*, Pſal. 100. 3.

By *Remembring* him we muſt underſtand, theſe particulars are intended.

1. That we ſeek and get a good meaſure of the Knowledge of God. No man can remember him at all, that does not know ſomething of him. Nor can any man remember what he is, unleſs he does in ſome meaſure know this; and we muſt remember him ſuch as he is, or we ſhall not do it to any good purpoſe. We muſt therefore betimes, enquire into what he has revealed of himſelf in his word. We muſt know and remember that he is, and is a rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek him. That he is a Being, Infinite, Eternal, Good and Juſt, Wiſe and Almighty. That he is our Creatour, and the Creatour of all things; that he is thereupon the Lord and owner of all, as he ſays, *The world is mine and the fulneſs thereof*, Pſal. 50. 12. *and we are his people, and the ſheep of his Paſture*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *Pſal.* 100. We muſt know and remember that he has laid his Laws upon

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us, and expects our Obedience to them; that he is Judge of all the Earth, and will render to every man according to his works. Thus we muſt remember him in what he is in himſelf, and in what relations he is pleaſed to bear towards us.

2. 'Tis alſo intended herein, that we ſhould often think of God, that we ſhould have him much in our minds, that we *ſet the Lord always before us*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of himſelf, *Pſal.* 16. 8. It is the Character of an evil man, that *God is not in all his thoughts*, and of very wicked people, that *they forget God.* Men may actually think of God often in the midſt of their worldly buſineſs, and may habitually acknowledge him in all their ways; they may and ought to depend upon his Providence, thank him for all they enjoy, praiſe him for and aſcribe to him all the good they do. We ſhould begin and end every day, and receive every Meal with actual thoughts of God, and ſerious Addreſſes to him of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. We ſhould duly ſet apart his Sabbaths to remember and worſhip him upon them.

3. This includes alſo ſuitable affections of the Heart: Our knowledge muſt not be ſpeculative and unaffecting. We muſt think of God with awfull reverence and fear of his Majeſty and Greatneſs. We muſt love him above all things, and deſire his favour and love as our chiefeſt good. We muſt admire and delight in his Holineſs, and Juſtice, and Goodneſs, and endeavour to conform to them.

4. This

4. This includes Obedience to his Commands, and Reſignation and Submiſſion to his Providence. This is due to him, and is the juſt acknowledgment of his right in us. His Laws muſt be the rule of our Actions, and his Glory our great end; as the Apoſtle ſays, 1 *Cor.* 10. 11. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And whatever portion or fortune he allots us, we muſt take with an humble, contented, and reſigned frame of ſpirit, as ſenſible that he diſpoſes but of his own in his ordering of us, and our circumſtances: We muſt be ready always after our great Pattern to ſay, *Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

Thus much is included in the word *Remember.*

And all this is to be done in our early Youth, according to the Wiſeman's advice here: As ſoon as poſſibly we can do it; without any delay or putting it off. We ſhould with the firſt exerciſes of our reaſon ſtudy, and learn to know him and his Laws: With the firſt actions of our wills we ſhould chuſe him for our chief good, and his Laws as our beſt rule; and make it our great care and endeavour to conform to them, rather than to the Cuſtoms and Faſhions and Maximes of the fooliſh and wicked World; and we ſhould ſet our firſt affections on him, give him our Hearts before the things of this World here get poſſeſſion of them.

This is that which *Solomon* adviſes; let us now proceed to conſider that which is his argument to urge this advice. That is, that *Evil days* will come, and the years in which a man ſhall ſay, he has

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no pleaſure in them. That this is ſpoken of old Age appears by the following verſes, wherein 'tis generally acknowledged he deſcribes that Age of humane Life; and indeed the deſcription he makes of it does juſtifie his giving it the name of *Evil days*, as he ſeems to have deſigned to do. I ſhall give the Summ of what he ſays to this purpoſe in the following particulars.

1. That is an evil time upon the account of the weakneſs and decay of Nature, which often attends it. There is then a great decay of all the faculties and powers; the mortal Body begins to fail. The Beauty of it is withered, the Strength exhauſted. The dim Eye can no longer ſee, nor the deaf Ear hear; the feeble Feet cannot walk, nor the Hands work as they could before. And in this weakneſs the Limbs which were ſtrong and vigorous become a burden to themſelves: The old man cannot help himſelf, but deſcends perhaps to the weakneſs of a Child again. Thus is he taken from action and buſineſs, that which made him taken notice of and conſiderable in the World, that which made him ſought to and reſpected. And now perhaps he ſees himſelf forgotten and forſaken; he ſees thoſe he has been kind to prove ungratefull, and thoſe whom he has nouriſht and brought up, grown weary of him. And where theſe things are, who would not account the time which that man continues further an Evil time.

2. But further; It often attends this decay of Nature, that they are loaded with pains and diſtempers. Theſe whenever they come are an heavy

heavy burden, even to thoſe who are young and ſtrong, and therefore they will much rather be ſo to the aged and weak; and theſe are more liable to them than younger perſons. Indeed if pains and diſtempers are very violent upon old Age, they are not of long continuance, becauſe weak Nature cannot then bear much: Yet they are very uneaſie ſometimes, and of long continuance too. The old perſon is oftentimes attended with the yearly returns of very painfull Diſtempers; which give him perhaps ſome intermiſſions for a little while; but 'tis only to let him gain ſo much ſtrength as to be able to endure and rub through the more returning fits of them. He ſhall feel the ſmart of former Wounds, and the Aches and Pains of old Bruiſes, and the ſtiffneſs and wearineſs of former Labours. Sickneſs confines him to his Houſe or his Chamber, and makes him a Priſoner at home. Pain wearies out his days, and makes him wiſh for the Night: And when the Night has continued a while, he wiſhes again for the Day: He has no comfort in his Days, nor reſt in the Nights. The remainder of comfort and pleaſure which weakneſs and decay had left, Sickneſs and Pain utterly laviſh away. Therefore,

3. It muſt be mentioned as another Inconvenience of old Age, that it is with many a time very deſtitute of Pleaſure. The old man has but a very weak and languid Sence at the moſt of all the pleaſant things of this World: The deſire now fails, as *Solomon* ſays, verſe 5. *The Sences and Appetites grow dull, and have*

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leſs reliſh of theſe things. The dim Eye is no more raviſht with beautifull Objects, nor is the deaf Ear to be charmed with harmonious Sounds. The Noſe and Pallate are hardly ſenſible any longer of pleaſing Taſts or Smells. *Can I diſcern between good and evil?* ſays old *Barſillai* to *David. Can thy ſervant taſt what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of ſinging men, and ſinging women?* 2 Sam. 19. 35. The Novelty of things which helped to tranſport him in younger years is now no more attending them, he can meet with nothing new, but is cloyed and ſick with the dull repetitions of the ſame things.

4 It is a great addition to the Evil of theſe days, that if any affliction or inconvenience befalls us then, it is uſually more incurable than in our younger years it might have been. *Man is born to trouble as the Sparks fly upwards:* Affliction will haunt and moleſt us as long as we live in this mutable, weak and expoſed State; and that condition of Life, which renders our afflictions moſt incurable, renders them alſo the moſt grievous and troubleſome: When our condition is hopeleſs as well as inconvenient, this more than doubles the grief of that inconvenience; and this is commonly the unhappy caſe of old Age If a man be then ſickly, he cannot expect ever to recover or enjoy a good State of Health again; if one diſtemper be cured it turns into another. He that is deprived of his Children then cannot hope to have more, as poor *Naomi* complained. If then he falls in-

to poverty, he muſt lie under it, and bear all the ſorrowfull attendants of that, for he is now weak and uncapable of that Induſtry which ſhould help him: He wants more than he did in younger years, and is leſs able to take pains to get it.

5. Laſtly, that which further helps to make old Age an evil time, is the certain approach and nearneſs of Death. It is known then, that this cannot be far off: His miſerable days will ſhortly end in diſſolution, from his ſick Bed he muſt go ere long to his cold Grave, and be a long Priſoner there: His beſt days are irrecoverably gone, and he ſhall never return to the health and vigour, the mirth and jollity of Youth again. The certainty of Death, is the great and uncomfortable diſparagement of the preſent Life. In all our mirth it damps us to think of it. It troubles our beſt days, it chills our warmeſt blood, it ſours our ſweeteſt delights, to have a ſerious thought that we muſt die. It affrights us to think I muſt ere long be cold and ſenceleſs, I muſt be a gaſtly Object to thoſe that have moſt delighted to ſee me. Thoſe I moſt love will haſten to bury me out of their ſight; they will commit me to worms and rottenneſs: I muſt lie down in darkneſs and oblivion, worms muſt feed on me, and the winds ere long ſcatter my contemptible duſt. I muſt leave all the pleaſant things I have here, and go into a new, an unknown World, from whence none come back to tell what is there: Theſe are ſad and very painfull thoughts to him,

him, that puts this Evil fartheſt from him. But with how much the more force muſt theſe things ſtrike and wound when they are certainly near. And to the aged Perſon theſe things muſt be near. They may indeed be as near to the youngeſt here preſent as to the oldeſt, but it may alſo be ſaid they may not be near ſuch; but it cannot be ſaid they may not be near them that are aged. Death with his fatal Dart is almoſt ready to ſtrike them: Their day is come to the Evening, and therefore they cannot be far from Night; their Glaſs is almoſt run and ſhall never be turn'd up again, and therefore muſt ſoon be out.

This alſo then may make old Age an evil time. And this is the time to which many men incline to put off their living well. but whether they do wiſely in this or no, will be beſt determin'd after we have well conſidered what is to be ſaid on the third Head of Diſcourſe; wherein I doubt not to make appear, as was propoſed, that the beſt defence and preparation we can poſſibly make againſt theſe *Evil days*, is to begin a religious and vertuous Courſe betimes, and to continue in it all our days before this time. This the Light of Nature taught a wiſe and thinking Heathen (*Cicero de Senect.*) who ſpeaks thus, *Aptiſſima omnino arma ſenectutis, &c.* The beſt weapons and defences of old Age againſt the Inconveniences it is liable to, are the Arts and the Exerciſes of Vertues: Which being cultivated through every Age of Life before, if we happen to live long will then bring forth wonderful

derful Fruits: Not only (ſays he) becauſe they will never deſert us, no not to the extream point of Life, though that be very conſiderable; but alſo becauſe the conſciouſneſs of a well ſpent Life, and the remembrance of many good and vertuous Actions are highly pleaſant to us. Thanks be to God we can ſay this upon much better grounds than the Heathens could; and then the Argument ought to have the more force upon us.

To make it appear that a religious and vertuous Life before, is the beſt preparation and defence that we can poſſibly make againſt the Evils that attend old Age, I ſhall inſiſt upon theſe two particulars.

1. This will in a great meaſure prevent ſome of the Evils, to which that part of Life is liable.

2. It will greatly alleviate thoſe which it does not prevent, and ſoften them with very effectual Conſolations.

In the firſt place, this will in a great meaſure prevent ſome of the Evils that old Age is liable to.

A vertuous and temperate Courſe of Life in our younger years gets a good habit of health, and ſettles, and confirms a good conſtitution. Temperance and Vertue cheriſh Nature, but violent Paſſions and Vices weaken and deſtroy it. He who governs himſelf wiſely, and according to the rules of Religion in his labours, and enjoyments, and converſations, takes that courſe which tends to preſerve his Health and Life.

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Such perſons are the moſt likely to live to an old Age, as *Solomon* tells us, when he ſays of the Wiſedom of good living, *Length of days is in her right Hand*; and ſuch are moſt likely to enjoy an healthy and vigorous old Age, according to what he ſays again, *to fear the Lord and depart from Evil is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones.* And in this way many are ſeen to enjoy a very healthy and vigorous old Age; It is ſaid of the Philoſopher *Leontinus Gorgias*, who had practiſed the good Morals he had taught, that he completed an hundred and ſeven years, and never ceaſed from ſtudy, and buſineſs; and when he was asked what could make him endure ſo long a life, he anſwered, he had nothing to accuſe or complain of his old Age for. And if a man enjoys an healthy and vigorous old Age, he is ſtill fit for buſineſs, he is ſtill uſeful and neceſſary to the World, and ſhall not ſee himſelf neglected or contemned: And then too he is the more ſenſible of pleaſures in his old Age, and they ſhall not utterly leave him to the laſt. Though Nature muſt decay in all men, yet in ſuch it will decay ſlower, and by more gentle degrees. But the Drunkenneſs and Gluttony, the Sloth and Luſts, and the wild and furious Paſſions of a wicked ungovern'd Life, haſten the Infirmities of old Age, and bring them upon ſome men even before their time; and theſe things make them alſo the more heavy and troubleſome when they come; whereas a good and ſober Life would either wholly prevent or much leſſen them.

Further, that diligence in an honeſt calling which Religion requires, that frugality, and honeſt dealing which it commands, are the moſt likely means to provide a competent portion of the World for our ſupport and comfort in old Age. The Bleſſing of God with a diligent hand makes rich; but Idleneſs and Riot and Prodigality, and ſuch a courſe of living as tends to draw down the Curſe of God upon a man, tend to bring him to rags and poverty in his old Age, or before it. The good man is likely to take his reſt and enjoy what he has gotten when he can labour no more; and the vitious and wicked man is likely to be condemned to toil and labour even with feeble and trembling Limbs.

Further, he that has practiſed the Vertues of Religion well in his Life paſt, ſhall be reſpected and eſteemed in his old Age for what he has done, when he is not capable of action and buſineſs any longer: He that has lived juſtly and righteouſly among his Neighbours will be the leſs liable to wrong; he that has lived peaceably will be quiet; he that has been good, kind and beneficent will find others kind to him: This is evidently the moſt likely courſe to find theſe conveniences in old Age. And he who has carried himſelf juſtly towards his Children, who has appeared cautiouſly to avoid any ways of wronging them, and who has alſo appeared to love them as well as himſelf, and to have conſulted their good as well as his own pleaſure and convenience, and to look upon them as parts of himſelf, ſuch a man takes certainly the beſt courſe

courſe to have dutiful Children, and to have them ready to help and comfort him if he lives to a craſy old Age. Beſides, he that valued Wiſdom in his younger years, and earneſtly purſued it, and lived according to the Rules of it, will be reſpected for this in his old Age; for this may continue with him to the laſt. The faculties of the mind may be exerciſed ſtill though the Body be weak, and by exerciſe may be kept vigorous and ready. They will not fail (ſays *Cicero* Ib.) unleſs he ceaſes to uſe them. Old men remember whatever they give their minds well to. They will not forget, ſays he, where they lay their Money, or where their Eſtate lies; their Wits will remain if their Induſtry does. And Induſtry is that which is the conſtant attendant and property of a vertuous and good Mind. And from hence their reſpect and eſteem will remain to them too, they will be ſought to for advice when they cannot act themſelves; and the guidance of affairs will be committed to them, which is the moſt important part of them. For theſe things *Solomon* ſays, *The hoary head is a Crown of Glory if it be found in the way of Righteouſneſs*, Prov. 16. 31.

In the next place it may be ſaid to make good the Wiſeman's argument: That to have lived religiouſly and well in our younger years, will mightily alleviate and ſoften the inconveniences of thoſe Evil days which it cannot prevent. As for inſtance,

The applauſe and approbation of a good Conſcience then, and the Thoughts of that good

which a man has done, will allay the trouble for that he can do but little more. How pleaſant will it be then to think I have lived according to reaſon, and as becomes a man I have honoured my ſelf, and deſerved the praiſe and eſteem of men: I have no reaſon to be aſhamed of any part of my Life: I have been reckoned uſefull in my place, and to have adorned my province and ſtation in the World: 'tis pleaſant for a man to think there is no one can ſpeak ill of him, at leaſt for the general courſe of his Life, but he muſt do it either out of Malice and Envy, or out of Ignorance: To think that he has pleaſed God, and has been accepted with him through Jeſus Chriſt; that he has not loſt a Life, but has ſpent it to the gaining of a better, he has laid out a temporal for an eternal one.

Again, the want of ſenſual pleaſure is no great trouble to a wiſe and vertuous man. He knows how empty and vain a thing it is; he had moderated his deſires after it before by the Exerciſes of his reaſon; by conſidering the folly and the miſchief of the exceſſive love and uſe of it. He does not deſire it much, and is glad that he does not. As the Philoſopher ſaid of the deſire of ſenſual pleaſure, when he was grown old. He was glad to be free from the Commands of ſo hard and tyrannous a Maſter: Beſides, the want of this is abundantly made up to ſuch a man in the pleaſures of his mind. And theſe the old man may ſtill enjoy, and he may be the more at liberty for theſe, by being freed from

from the Importunities of the other. Learning and Philoſophy will afford pleaſant thoughts and entertainment to the laſt, and ſo will Religion and Devotion: But an ignorant and vitious Mind, will in the dregs of Life be ſad and melancholy, and diſcontented.

Further, The very thought and aſſurance of the approach and nearneſs of Death, may be a comfort to a good man againſt many of the Inconveniences of old Age. Death it ſelf will not be very terrible to him, whom a good Life has made ready for it; who knows his Sins pardoned, and his good Deeds accepted through the Mediatour; who can ſay, *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſht my courſe, I have kept the Faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs.* It is pleaſant inſtead of being terrible to a good man, when he can ſay, *My work is almoſt done, and I am now expecting my Reward: My warfare is well nigh accompliſhed, and the next thing that is to come is my Crown.* I am indeed near the time of parting with this World, but I ſhall exchange it for a better. I ſhall go to never fading pleaſures, to durable riches, to unſpeakable joy and felicity. Can a man be troubled with the nearneſs and approach of his Death, when he knows it will be a change that will be much to his advantage. And he that knows this, will be comforted moſt effectually, under the Evils of his preſent condition: When he can think if nothing elſe can cure them Death will, and that very ſhortly; it cannot be long ere I ſhall be free

from

from them all. Ere long my pains ſhall be at an end, and I ſhall be at eaſe, I ſhall be removed from among thoſe that are wickedly a weary of me, and willing to part with me, to live with them that will be as willing to receive me. And if his poſterity are ſuch as can deſerve the Bleſſing of his Prayers, he can comfortably commit them to the Providence of God, and think that by his good and righteous and holy Life, he has entailed a Bleſſing upon them, which is a far better portion with a ſmall proviſion, than the greateſt abundance of ill gotten goods.

And thus much I think may ſuffice to demonſtrate, that a good and vertuous Life makes the beſt preparation that can be againſt the Evils and Inconveniences of old Age. And this is certainly a very good Argument, for our minding Religion in our Youth. If we do ſo we are fit to die, if it ſhould not be our lot to live to old Age; and as ſuch a courſe is moſt likely to lengthen our lives ſo far, ſo it will prevent or alleviate the Evils that commonly attend that time, if we do live to it.

For a Concluſion of this Diſcourſe, and to ſtrengthen the Argument, I ſhall briefly compare this with the other ways of living, that many betake themſelves to.

When we are entering upon the World, the moſt of us do diſpoſe of our ſelves in one or other of theſe two ways. Either we greedily follow the pleaſures of the World, and give our ſelves up to the purſuit and enjoyment of them:

Or

Or we betake our ſelves to the eager purſuit of wealth, or honours, and to raiſe a fortune as we call it. But alas, neither of theſe two ways of living will be able to afford men that true comfort and ſatisfaction in their latter end, which may be derived from Vertue and Religion; theſe will rather end in Vexation and Trouble.

They that give themſelves up to Pleaſures, treaſure nothing but ſorrow and ſhame for after-days. What profit is there in theſe when they are gone? what fruit do they leave behind them? and how much pain and ſorrow do they leave when they leave an impair'd Eſtate, a ſick diſtemper'd Body, and a guilty Conſcience? And for a man to think, I have amuſed and entertained my ſelf with Vanities, and for them have neglected and forſaken the moſt ſolid and durable Goods: I have received all my good things here: Alas how thin, how empty a portion is it! Yet this is all, this is all I was born to enjoy: Theſe guilty pleaſures cannot entitle me to better things, therefore they are not earneſts of ſuch. I have then received and ſpent all my portion of good and happineſs. Theſe are very ſad and grievous thoughts, and ſuch as theſe muſt the Sinners guilty frolicks end in. Accordingly we may obſerve, that none are ſo moroſe and melancholy and diſcontented in old Age, as they who have licentiouſly followed their pleaſure in the former part of their Life; who are ſmarting now for their fooliſh frolicks, and have the burden of their preſent

Evils

Evils much the greater and the heavier for them.

Again, let us conſider thoſe who have ſpent all their Life in heaping up of Wealth. Theſe do ſeem indeed to be ſomewhat the wiſer perſons of the two, but there is not much difference between them. He that moſt purſues Riches does not certainly gain them, and while he is ſtill drawn after them with hopes, they perhaps like his ſhadow fly from him ſtill, and ſo he loſes his labour and his life too. He that gets Riches cannot be ſure to keep them all his days, or that he ſhall comfort his old Age with them. And when that comes with the Evils, and Pains and Diſtempers, which all the wealth he has gotten cannot remove: when it cannot reprieve him from the Grave, nor ſet his Death a moment further from him; when it will leave him at his going out of this World to all the Miſeries of the next, and this cannot purchaſe his peace with God, nor redeem his Soul from Hell, nor gain him admittance into the Courts of Heaven: Then how does he diſdain all his labour! how is his ſick mind fretted to think how he has loſt his time! how little comfort does all his labour in this kind afford him, when the fruits of it are ſo uſeleſs to him!

Thus we ſee the ends of worldly men, of thoſe who minded nothing all their days, but the pleaſures and wealth of this World. Their end is ſad and gloomy, their ſweets turn bitter, their abundance ends in poverty and wretched Nakedneſs, their Mirth in ſorrow, and their

ſhort

ſhort lived Pleaſures in everlaſting Pain and Torment. But the good and vertuous Man cloſes up a troubleſome Life with joy and gladneſs, his Labours end in reſt, and his Pains in eaſe and felicity. If he be encombred with any outward Evils, his comfort is, he is going away from them all: If he has received any good things here, he knows alſo that far better things are reſerved for him in the World to come.

THE

THE PRAYER.

ALmighty and moſt Wiſe, and moſt gracious God. Thou art Glorious in Holineſs, fearful in thy Praiſes, doing Wonders: all thy Works, O Lord, are done in Judgment: thou art Righteous in all thy Ways, and Holy in all thy Works: We admire thee, we praiſe, we bleſs thee, for thy worderful Works of Creation, and for thy wonderful Works of Providence. O Lord, there is none to whom we may compare, or liken thee, there is no God beſides thee. And in particular we deſire at this time to Praiſe thee, for the Wiſdom and Goodneſs thou haſt ſhown in thy moſt excellent Law, in that it is kindly and exactly ſuited to our Natures, and ſo is altogether fit to promote all our true Intereſts and our Happineſs. To comply with this is our Wiſdom, and Honour; it is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones; it has length of days and good repute, and Wealth and Peace to reward us with. In keeping thy Commands there is great reward. Bleſſed then are the undefiled in the Way, who walk in the Law of the Lord. It is good for us to keep thy Precepts; they are ſweeter than Honey, and the Honey Comb, and more to be deſired then Gold, yea then much fine Gold; they beſt adorn and accompliſh us; they are the Happineſs of our Souls, as well as of our Bodies; they rectifie and compoſe the Mind, they give us Peace and Strength within; great Peace they have which Love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them. Then ſhall we never have occaſion to be aſhamed, when we have reſpect unto all thy Commandments. Thou art good, O Lord, and doſt good, O do thou teach us thy Statutes: O that our Ways were directed to obſerve them. Lord, make

us as early as we can to remember thee our Creator; to remember and turn unto thee, to conſider and know, and do the Duties which we owe to thee as ſuch: We have gone aſtray like loſt Sheep; Oh ſeek thou thy Servants and ſave us, that we do not forget thy Commandments. That we may never forget them or thee, we pray thee to write thy Law in our Hearts, and to put thy fear in our inward Parts, for thy fear is a good Principle of this Wiſdom, of good and vertuous Living. Make us to reverence thy Greatneſs and Glory, which is ſo bright in all thy Works, and ſo wonderful in the Creation of our ſelves; for we, Lord, are fearfully and wonderfully made: Make us ſenſible of thy continual Preſence with us, that thou doſt thereby continue our Beings, and obſerve our Actions: we depend upon thee while we provoke thee, we are in thy hand at all times to do with us whatſoever thou pleaſeſt; thou who art our Creator, art the Supream and invincible Diſpoſer of us: O let us ſtand in awe, that we may not ſin againſt thee. Make us concern'd to pleaſe thee, who art the Fountain of our Beings, and the beſtower of all our Good, that thou mayſt delight in us, to do us good, and that we may, according to thy Deſign in making us, be happy.

O Lord, forgive us we pray thee, all our paſt wandrings from thee, forgive us all our ſins of negligence and ignorance, and endue us, we beſeech thee, with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to thy Holy word. Be reconciled to us by the Blood of thy Son Jeſus, through Faith, in which we humbly ſeek thy Favour: We pray thee turn from us all thoſe Evils that we moſt righteouſly have deſerved, in time paſt; and grant us hereafter to ſerve and pleaſe thee, in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the days of our Life. Lord, let us be planted in thy Houſe, and abide in the Communion of thy Church, and there flouriſh like the Palm-

Tree.

Tree, and if we live to old Age, let us be even then fruitful in good Works, to thy Praiſe and Glory.

We make our humble Supplications to thee, O Lord, for all Men. Let the Earth be filled with Knowledge of the Lord, as Waters cover the Sea. Proſper thy Church, and give it great encreaſe of all Grace, and give it in thy due time Tranquillity and Peace, deliver it from inteſtine Diſturbance and outward Enemies. We humbly implore thy mercy upon theſe Kingdoms in General; Lord, grant that all things well-pleaſing to thee, may flouriſh and abound among us, and do thou by thy Almighty Providence watch over us, and direct our publick Affairs for our good. Particularly, we pray for our moſt Gracious King and Queen; Grant them in Health and Wealth long to live, ſtrengthen them to vanquiſh and overcome all their Enemies. Teach us, and all their Subjects, duely to conſider whoſe Authority they have, and ſo to ſerve, honour, and humbly obey them, in thee and for thee, according to thy moſt Bleſſed word and Ordinance; that ſo they may be the Miniſters of God to us for good. Do good to all amongſt us, beyond what we can ask or think: Let thy Bleſſing upon the words which we have this Day heard, make it to dwell and take root in us, and bring forth Fruit even to an hundred fold. And let the ſame Gracious mercy which has bleſt us this Day, with things neceſſary for Life and Godlineſs, watch over us this Night, and give us ſafe and comfortable Reſt, and if it ſhall pleaſe thee to add ſtill to our Lives, make us ſteady and perſevering in well-doing to the end of our Days; all which we humbly crave, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory.

Our Father, &c.

THE

OF A
Death-Bed Repentance;
SHEWING
How unreaſonable it is for any Man to rely upon it.

Let us Pray.

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy moſt gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlaſting Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Numb. 23. verſ. 10. Latter Part.

Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.

Balaam a famous Sorcerer and Fortune-teller among the *Midianites*, was ſent for by *Balak* King of *Moab* to curſe *Iſrael*, when they were upon his Borders. The

Meſſengers came to him with this Complement from the King. *For I wot that he whom thou bleſſeſt is bleſſed, and he whom thou curſeſt is curſed*; Chap. 22. verſ. 6. Such an eſteem had he raiſed of himſelf among the ignorant Heathens. And very fain would the wicked wretch have done that which *Balak* deſired for the ſake of the wages of Iniquity which he loved. This appears by his *ſeeking of enchantments againſt Iſrael*, as he ſeveral times did, as the *1ſt.* verſe of the *24th.* Chapter intimates, but it pleaſed God conſtantly to over-rule and hinder him. And when he ſought to utter his direful and miſchievous Charms, which before perhaps could blaſt the Fruits of the Earth, and cauſe Thunder and Lightning, and raiſe an Hurricane, and throw down Buildings: He can now do nothing of all this, but the Spirit of God conſtrains him to utter only things honourable and favourable of *Iſrael*. In a deep ſence, which this poſſeſt him with, of the favour of God to that People, and being ſo far enlightned for the preſent, though againſt his Will, as to underſtand that they ſhould be happy not only in this Life, but alſo in that to come, if they would keep the Commandments of their God; he therefore concludes his firſt Parable, or ſententious and prophetick Speech concerning them in the words of our Text,

Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.

He

He was not at all reconciled to their God, who hindred him from getting thoſe great Rewards which *Balak* offered him, nor did incline to become a Proſelyte to the *Jew*'s Religion: He had rather enjoy his Gain and Honour among the Heathens ſtill, like a falſe Prophet, than embrace the Truth and become meaner among the *Jews*. But yet he wiſhes for the happy end of the *Jews*: He would willingly be reckoned among them when he ſhould come to die, that he might be a partaker in their felicity in the next World. This was the ſence of his Mind; and herein he ſpeaks alſo the mind of a great many others beſides. There are many in the World who would live the lives of licentious Sinners, and yet at laſt would die the Death of Saints: who would have the profits and pleaſures of Sin here, and hereafter the Rewards of Religion too. And as a great many wiſh this, ſo they think they have found out an expedient to obtain it, and that is by a Death-Bed Repentance.

It ſhall be the whole Buſineſs of the preſent Diſcourſe, to demonſtrate the Folly and Danger of relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, of wiſhing or expecting with this falſe Prophet to live a wicked Life, and yet to *Die the Death of the Righteous, and to make an end like him.* And this I ſhall endeavour to ſet before you in the following particulars.

1. There is no Man can poſſibly tell, whether he ſhall have the ſpace and warning of

ing Sickneſs to repent in, or no. Our fortunes and conditions are not at our own diſpoſe, but at the diſpoſal of him whom we daily offend by our Wickedneſs: Nor can we be any more ſure before-hand of the *Way*, than we can be of the *Time* of our going out of this World. Many things may prevent us from having the ſpace of a lingring Sickneſs to repent in; and do we not greatly provoke the ſupream Diſpoſer to prevent us of this, by our delaying to repent. How many ways are there of dying beſides that on a ſick Bed, and which of them may be his fortune no Man can tell. Should we then defer our Repentance to a ſick Bed, when 'tis very uncertain and hazardous whether we ſhall die there or not? But if we ſhould die there, the Sickneſs may be ſuch as to give us no opportunity to repent there. It may take away the uſe of reaſon, may utterly hinder all compoſed thinking; we may die in Convulſions, in a ſtupid Lethargy, or in the ravings of a Feaver, or under ſuch violent and racking pains as ſhall effectually hinder us from doing any thing towards a happy Departure. Thus he who would not repent before, is not able to do it now: He wilfully loſt all the time of repentance to the laſt Minutes of it, and now he loſes them too by his unfortunate Diſtemper: But how unreaſonable is it for a man to throw away all his time to the laſt Minutes, when he does not know whether he ſhall be capable of uſing them to his advantage, or not?

2. Let

2. Let us consider how great Inconvenience men put upon themselves at last, who defer their Repentance to a sick and dying Bed.

They perhaps now think themselves very wise, and that they do well to put off all their Sorrows to come together, and to trouble them but once: But alas, when these do thus come together, they will be forced to conclude, they were very foolish in so doing; when they find the Burden of all at once too heavy for them to bear: Certainly a great load is much easier carried in several parcels, than all at once; and if the whole be too heavy for our strength, it were our Wisdom to divide it. When a man is under the pains and faintness of a Disease, the grief of parting with all that he has in this World, all his dear Relations, his loved Enjoyments, and the sweet Fruits of his own Labours: When he is a Prisoner to his Bed, is separated from all his Pleasures, loaths the greatest Dainties, has his Head aking, his Heart faint, his Limbs feeble and trembling; these sure are very unfit Circumstances to put off the Trouble and Sorrows of Repentance too. How wretched must he be, who has at the same time Trouble without and Anguish within? Pain in his Body and Distress in his Mind? Who in this condition must have his Conscience accusing him for his ill Life, calling to mind past and forgotten Follies and Extravagancies, when he has the Pardon of them to seek. And by consequence he must have the Flames of Hell, as it were before him, and be terrifyed with the apprehensions of being spee-

dily carried before his offended Judge, to be doomed to his eternal and unalterable State? How ſad is it to be told he muſt now ſuddenly leave this World, and does at this very time deſerve to be thrown into Hell! Thoſe that defer their Repentance to a Death-Bed, do not rightly underſtand, or elſe they do not conſider the true Nature of it: They think to paſs it over with a Lord have mercy upon me, with a general ſlight Confeſſion that they have ſinned, and with a few Sighs and formal Reſolutions, that they will do ſo no more. They do not conſider that true Repentance is a very bitter thing, that in great Sinners eſpecially, as theſe men are wont to be, it muſt be attended with a very hearty Sorrow, with great Anguiſh of Soul, with earneſt Indignation againſt themſelves for their Sins, with a ſence of the terrible Deſerts of them, that they muſt judge and condemn themſelves as unworthy to find favour with God, and deſerving the everlaſting Puniſhments of Hell. And theſe ſure are very unhappy Thoughts to be joyned with the ſad Circumſtances of Sickneſs and Dying; and theſe men put off the moſt uneaſie and afflicting Thought to be born then, when they are in the moſt feeble condition, and the moſt unfit to bear them; we ſhall, we might think, have trouble enough without them, with the ſad outward Circumſtances of ſuch a Caſe, and might ſay ſufficient for that day is the neceſſary and unavoidable Evil thereof, and may eaſily ſee if we will that it is highly fooliſh to bring upon it more Evil, and Trouble than it needs

needs to have. It is plainly our wiſdom to provide before-hand againſt that time for the Comfort of it; to lay up Supports and Conſolations to allay and mitigate the Evils that will attend it. And this we might do by practiſing our Repentance in the time of our Health, by forſaking our Sins betimes, and living a good and vertuous Life for ſome time before we come to die. Then if we have Sorrow without we ſhall have Joy within, if the Body be in pain, we may be at eaſe in the Mind. The Reflections upon a well-ſpent Life would comfort us in our Weakneſs; the joyful Hopes and Expectations of entering into Reſt and Happineſs, would alleviate our preſent Pains; and a ſence of favour and reconcilement with God would conquer the fears of Death, and make us ready and willing to appear before our Judge.

3. But if a man has the warning of a lingring and ſlow Sickneſs to repent of his Sins, and prepare for his Death; 'tis yet a very great Hazard whether he will repent under it or not. If he has not ſuch a Diſeaſe as will neceſſarily hinder this, yet many other things may and often do ſo. We do not ſeldom ſee men that deferred their Repentance till this time, as far from performing it then as ever they were before. A man may think while he is in health, and engaged in the World, and expoſed to the Temptations of it, that the danger of that time, and the confinement and ſeparation from the World, will mightily help him to do this neceſſary work then, and put him upon it; but

alas, the contrary to this does very ordinarily come to paſs.

With ſome the very pain and trouble of their Diſeaſe, though it does not take away their Senſes and the uſe of their Reaſon, yet it is able to diſtract their minds, and divert them from all Thoughts of Repentance and making their peace with God. Does not daily experience teach us, that a ſevere pain if it be but at a tooth, and that even in a Perſon habitually pious and good, is able to diſturb the mind, and unfit one for any exerciſe of Devotion, and ſo detain the Thoughts that they can fix on nothing but that. All that we are commonly ſenſible of in ſuch a caſe is the preſent pain, and all that we can be concern'd about, is to get rid of the preſent importunate grievance: And is it not much rather likely to be thus with a man under the pain and trouble of Sickneſs? If ſo little an inconvenience can divert even a good man from fixed and good Thoughts; how much more likely is it, that greater pain and uneaſineſs will divert him from ſuch who is habitually wicked, who has lived all his Life an utter ſtranger to ſuch Thoughts, has never taſted the pleaſure, nor found the benefit of them? Beſides, as the delaying Sinner has been wont to love his Body better than his Soul, to contrive the ſatisfaction and convenience of that, rather than the everlaſting Happineſs of this; he muſt needs be apt in this diſtreſs to be ſtill in the ſame diſpoſition, and to be ſo buſied about the griefs and pains of his Body, as to neglect his Soul ſtill, as he has done all his days before:

before: And if ſo, what a madneſs is it for a man to expect and wait for the very worſt diſpoſition and ſtate of his Body, that he may then perform the greateſt and moſt important buſineſs of his Soul!

Again, the very fear and apprehenſion of dying quickly may happen to take away all thought or concern of preparing for Death: This may ſeem unlikely, but yet it does ſometimes come to paſs. I knew a man (ſays one who had been wont to viſit ſick and dying Perſons) and he not altogether a careleſs Liver neither, who being at the point of Death, when he was admoniſht by a Miniſter to prepare himſelf for his departure, was ſo poſſeſſed and overwhelmed with the Thought that he was in danger of ſpeedy Death, that he could think of nothing elſe but of ſending for this and the other Phyſitian, of taking this and the other Medicine; and all the care and thought that he could be poſſeſt with, was only how he might recover and eſcape the preſent and imminent danger, and in the midſt of ſuch thoughts he breathed his laſt. And thus it is very likely to be with many men; he who has great affairs upon his hands, and eſpecially if they be a little entangled, he who leaves a Family but ill provided for, or likely to need his preſence among them: He who would fain ſee a Son or a Daughter well diſpoſed of and ſetled, as we call it, will be apt to be wholly devoured with the ſame care. Thus ſure it is very likely to be with a great lover of the World, with him that loves nothing but what is here, that has no treaſure

ſure in Heaven, nor expectations of any thing comfortable in the other World: When he apprehends himſelf in danger to leave all at once what he has here, to leave it for ever, and go he knows not where, and he knows not to what, but fears exceedingly a great deal of ill; ſuch a man muſt needs be liable to a great Conſternation at the Summons of Death, and to think of nothing but by what means he may avoid it for the preſent, and gain ſome more time to make a better preparation for it than he has done.

And further, it may be the ſick man is not in danger of a ſpeedy Death, or perhaps if he be ſo, he will not believe it, as it is with a great many: He hopes perhaps to recover this Sickneſs, and promiſes himſelf after it many years of life, when he has but a few moments to live: And the Flatteries of Friends will be apt to encourage this conceit, and the Phyſitian muſt give him, it may be, more hopes than himſelf has, to ſupport this ſick mans Spirits, and aſſiſt his own preſcriptions: And then, though the concern to avoid Death does not put him by his Repentance, yet the hopes of longer Life may do it; he will think he needs not yet repent, the dangerous period before which he purpoſes to do it is yet a great way off, and thus he goes on to cheat himſelf into everlaſting perdition.

And it is no wonder if a man who has been habitually wicked, and lived many years in his Sins, does take any encouragement to put off his Repentance ſtill, and can hardly find in his Heart even upon his Death-Bed to do this.

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The cuſtom of ſinning is like a ſecond Nature, and is not but with the greateſt difficulty and labour overcome. It will hardly ever forſake a man: Of the habitual Sinner is that for the moſt part true, which is ſaid, *Job* 20. 11. *His Bones are full of the Sins of his Youth, which ſhall lie down with him in the Duſt.* How unlikely indeed is it, that a man ſhould in a moment ſo fall out with his Sin as to hate it, and throw it off for ever, when he has many years loved and cheriſhed it; or that he ſhould now all at once be poſſeſt with an hearty Love of God and Goodneſs, which for many years he has neglected and hated? Accordingly we often ſee Perſons upon their Death-Bed, ſtill the very ſame that they were before; as they lived ſo they die; there is no change or alteration in the leaſt appears in the ſtate and diſpoſition of their minds. We find them exerciſing the beloved Sin in their Diſcourſe, when they cannot do it in their Actions; it appears to have ſtill a faſt poſſeſſion of the Soul, even when the opportunities of committing it are taken from them. How often do we find the profane Perſon then profane, the habitual Swearer curſing and ſwearing with his laſt Breath. How often is the covetous Perſon taken up with his worldly Affairs, thinking and talking of his Bags and Poſſeſſions, or of gainful Bargains, and further gettings even to the very minute, when he muſt loſe and part with all. How often is the proud and vain Perſon then vain and proud too, even then concerned about Beauty and Cloaths, about trimming up and adorning the poor wretched

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Carkaſs which is likely within a few moments to be but rottenneſs and putrefaction. This hardneſs at Death and unconcernedneſs even then about a future State, is a very tremendous and deplorable Judgment of God; which very often falls upon thoſe who have long reſiſted the means of Grace, and refuſed to repent and turn to him. He gives up the obſtinate Sinner to a Judicial hardneſs, which the very near approach of Death and Judgment ſhall not be able to move: He lets him be forgetful of himſelf at the point of Death; becauſe he was and would be all his Life long forgetful of God and his Duty to him. He would not make ſure of his pardon before, and now he ſhall have no thought or concern about it.

And there is yet another hindrance the of delaying Sinners repentance at the point of Death, which all ſuch are in great danger of, and many fall under, and that is Deſpair: The ſame Adverſary of their Souls who tempted them before to preſume, will now if they are at all awakened, and ſenſible of their condition, be very ready to hurry them into this. And ſurely there is too much ground for ſuch a temptation in the caſe of him who has deferred his Repentance till now: He muſt be in great danger of falling into a hopeleſs and deſpairing Senſe of his Condition, if he has any at all, whoſe own Conſcience with the Adverſary can tell him, he has ſquandered away the time of mercy, and his day of Grace is come to its end, before he has ſecured the Grace and Favour of God. He has ſpent his whole Life in Sin and Rebellion againſt

gainſt him that made him, to whoſe Glory he ought to have lived, and whoſe Mercy and Love he now ſtands in need of: That he has utterly loſt one Life, and ſhall not be truſted with another: that as he can never undoe the Ills he has done, ſo he has no time left to alter his Courſe in, and live it better. And when he thinks with himſelf that at ſuch and ſuch times, he was invited and earneſtly urged to repent and break off his Sins, and he had ſome good motions towards it in his mind, but he made a ſhift to ſtifle thoſe motions, he ſlighted the good Counſel, and deſpiſed the neceſſary Reproofs; How apt muſt he be in the midſt of ſuch thoughts to fall into deſpair? to think that God will now only laugh at his Calamity, that if he ſhould repent he ſhall be refuſed: And then he will neglect it, as thinking it now too late, and that it would be in vain. This is the ſad Caſe of many a dying Sinner, who has lived all his life in the contempt of God and Religion: He now gives himſelf for loſt, and goes to Hell expecting to go to Hell: He throws away his laſt minutes in deſpair, after he has wilfully loſt his whole Life before in preſumption.

So many things there are which may hinder a man from having any mind or thought to repent at laſt. But now when no man can poſſibly tell, but ſome one or other of theſe may be his caſe when he comes to die; if he neglects this before, how plainly unreaſonable and extravagant is it to put off our Repentance to that time.

4. Another Argument to diſſuade men from relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, may be this: What Repentance men do practice in that condition, it is very ſeldom ſincere and true. Some indeed are ſtruck then with a mighty fear of God, and dread of their final Sentence, and of the Puniſhments of Hell; which they are conſcious to themſelves they have deſerved, and which they think are near the getting hold on them. And in this fright they are full of confeſſions of their Sins, and condemnations of themſelves for their former Evil life, and earneſtly they ſue for pardon and mercy, and make great proteſtations how good they will be, if it will but pleaſe God to ſpare them. But alas, all this with the moſt of men in this condition is but falſe and diſſembled, all this does ſeldom ariſe to a true and ſincere Repentance. It proceeds in the moſt from a wrong Principle: They only dread the Wrath of God, and the Puniſhments of Sin; they do not hate their Sin, they are not truly fallen out with it, they do not love God, nor are heartily reconciled to his Commandments. True Repentance ought to be entirely voluntary and free, but this is entirely forced. They talk of leaving only what is leaving of them, and of ſinning no more when they think they ſhall not have opportunity to entertain themſelves with their beloved Sins any more. It is poſſible a man in this condition may think himſelf, that his Repentance is ſound, and his Reſolutions are hearty, but it is very eaſie for him to be deceived. It is eaſie (ſays one) for a man to think he has no mind

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to do that which he plainly ſees it is not in his Power to do. Poſſibility, ſays he, is the beſt Proof and Trial of the Will: If thou doſt not while thou canſt do, this does moſt manifeſtly and truly ſhew, that thou haſt not the Will to do. There is a great deal of diſſembled ſeeking to God, and pretended Converſion to him under diſtreſs and affliction among the Sons of men. Such was that of the *Jews* ſpoke of in *Pſal.* 78. 34. where 'tis ſaid, *When he ſlew them then they ſought him, and they returned and enquired early after God*: But it is added, in verſe 36, 37. of that Pſalm, *Nevertheleſs they did flatter him with their Mouth, and lied unto him with their Tongue*; *for their Heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant.* In like manner the late penitent makes perhaps very earneſt Addreſſes to God, but it is only to get out of his preſent diſtreſs, and if this be granted and his fears are over, he ſoon forgets all the good promiſes that he had made. Of thoſe who make theſe good Vows and Proteſtations in their Sickneſs and Danger, a very ſmall proportion do fulfil them when they have eſcaped their danger, which ſhews they are for the moſt part falſe and deceitful ones: The moſt of them return after a little while to their abdicated Sins, like *the Dog to his Vomit, or the Swine that was waſht to wallowing in the Mire.* Or inſtead of thoſe naufeated Sins, ſays one, (*Hamm.* Pract. Cat.) they make choice of ſome other new Path to Hell, entertaining Covetouſneſs inſtead of Prodigality, ſpiritual Pride inſtead of carnal Security, Envy, Malice, Sediti-

on,

on, Faction, in commutation for Luſt or Drunkenneſs, and Swearing. And it deſerves to be conſidered, whether it be not moſt likely that the delaying Sinners repentance on a ſick Bed will be falſe and diſſembled: When he has all his Life-time propoſed to himſelf not to repent, but when Death ſummons him into another World, is it not very likely that he now keeps to that which has been his ſetled Reſolution? and that his Repentance has no other Principle now, than his Apprehenſions of the nearneſs of Death and Judgment? Is it not very likely that he who would never fear puniſhment till he came to think it near, does now fear it only becauſe he thinks it near, and that all the Principle of his Repentance is the fear of approaching Puniſhment? This then is all the Repentance that ſuch an one is likely to practice at ſuch a time; and ſuch as this will never be accepted with God, nor bring a man to Heaven; with only ſuch as this he may periſh everlaſtingly. How fooliſh and extravagant is it then for a man to put off his Repentance through all that time, when it is moſt likely to be true, and wherein he may have the proof of its truth in fruits meet for Repentance? And that he ſhould put it off to that time, wherein it is moſt likely to be falſe, and cannot be proved true by anſwerable Fruits?

5. From what has been ſaid laſt, I may frame another Argument againſt our relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, and that is, It is at the beſt but uncertain and uncomfortable. The change

change of mind which God requires muſt proceed from a deep ſence of the vileneſs of Sin in it ſelf; of that ingratitude, injuſtice and rebellion, which is in it towards the great God: There muſt be a hatred of it upon theſe accounts, and earneſt reſolutions to forſake all Sin for the future. And this change muſt proceed to the loving of God more than this World, to the chuſing and preferring Heaven before Earth, and the pleaſures of Religion more than thoſe of Sence and Sin. And if the Principle of our Sorrows and Vows were ſuch a change of mind as this, they would then continue if life were continued, and would be put in practice in the Courſe of a godly, righteous and ſober Converſation, even when the danger and fright were over. And in that caſe God will accept the will for the Deed, if it be a firm and rectified Will (*Ham.* lb.) though the man does not live to put his reſolutions in practice; when it is his misfortune, not his fault that he does not live a good Life after it; becauſe he has no more time granted him to live, not becauſe he would not live well. But now whether the dying Sinners repentance be ſuch as this, or not, no man can tell. This late repentance may prove ſincere and ſufficient to find favour with God, who ſearches the Heart and tries the Reigns, but it is very unlikely to be ſuch, as the former Argument has demonſtrated, and it very ſeldom does prove ſuch, and no man that dies in it can poſſibly aſſure himſelf, or be aſſured by any one elſe, that his Repentance is ſincere and acceptable with God, and therefore at the beſt it is uncertain

certain and uncomfortable. No man can tell the Truth of his Repentance till it is put to a Trial, till it meets with Temptations, and conquers them, and brings forth the Fruits of Vertue and Holineſs. And ſince without Holineſs no man can ſee God, but the Holineſs of the Heart muſt be demonſtrated by the Life and Converſation, as our Saviour ſays, *a Tree is known by its Fruits*; it cannot then be certainly pronounced concerning any man what ſhall become of him, who has lived a vitious and ungodly Life all his days, and only comes to ſome Sorrows and good Proteſtations and Vows on his Death-Bed. We may hope well in Charity but cannot determine: And though we cannot poſitively ſay, there is no hope in ſuch a caſe, yet we muſt ſay, there is very ſmall hope: And this is according to the Senſe of the Ancients in this matter, whoſe opinions to confirm what has been ſaid, I ſhall produce.

Auguſtin (lib. 50. *Hom.* H. 41.) ſpeaks thus. He who in his laſt extremity of Sickneſs, ſeems to repent, and departs this Life; I confeſs to you I do not deny him what he aſks (by which he means Abſolution or the bleſſed Sacrament) that is, I treat him as a true penitent, becauſe he may be ſo for ought I know; but I cannot preſume to ſay poſitively that he has made a good departure. A good man living well (ſays he) goes out of this World ſecure: And he who practices repentance in his Health and afterwards lives well he may be ſecure; but he that repents only at laſt at the point of Death, whether he be ſecure or not I am not ſecure. Again he

he says to this Case, Wouldst thou be free from doubt? would you avoid uncertainty in a matter of such importance, then practice Repentance while thou art in health, for if thou dost so thou art secure when thy last day comes upon thee: If you ask why? I say, because thou hast then practised thy Repentance, while it was yet in thy power to have sinned longer: But if thou then do this when thou canst sin no more, thy Sins have forsaken thee rather than thou them. And he adds, I therefore grant thee repentance, because I know not what may be the will of God concerning thee. If I certainly knew it would not profit thee, I would not grant it; If I certainly knew it would profit, I would not thus admonish, I would not terrifie thee. Chuse then says he that which is certain, and do not rely upon that which is uncertain. Thus speaks he.

Another (*Isidorus de sum. bono*) says thus, if any man repents while he could go on in Sin, and while he yet lives cleanses himself from all Iniquity; there is no doubt but when he dies he shall be translated to Eternal Rest. But if a man spends his whole Life in Wickedness, and then comes to repent at the point of Death, as his Damnation is uncertain, so his Pardon is doubtful.

I shall only mention one more, and that is *Salvian* (*de Avarit.* l. 1. cap.) What to say in this case I know not (says he) what I may permit I am utterly ignorant. To discourage and withhold a man from seeking and using this last Remedy were hard and impious, but to

promiſe and aſſure him any thing in ſo late a Repentance were alſo raſh. It is his beſt courſe in this condition to leave nothing untried, rather than to do nothing towards helping himſelf, eſpecially becauſe, though I know not whether this may help at laſt, yet we may be certain that to attempt nothing is pernicious.

Thus much they have ſaid, and thus much at leaſt muſt be ſaid to this caſe. And now methinks this ſhould be ſufficient to deter any man from relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, eſpecially any man that has time and opportunity in his hands to perform a more ſure one: This is at the beſt but an uncertain and uncomfortable one, no man can tell whether it will be accepted of God or not, becauſe no man can certainly tell whether it be true or not. And though a Sinner ought not to deſpair in ſuch a caſe, yet he can have but little, and that a very wavering hope. Such a one may be ſaved, but neither he nor any one elſe can be aſſured that he ſhall be ſo. There is ſo much ground of hope in this caſe, as may encourage a wretched Sinner who has neglected himſelf all his days, at his laſt hours to try what Repentance will then do for him; it is the only remedy he has left, and if that fail nothing will help him: But there is not ſo much ground of hope as may give any man who is now in health, any reaſonable encouragement to put off his Repentance till that time. Certainly it is very unreaſonable for a man to build the Hopes of his Salvation, upon that which cannot ſecure his Salvation to him.

To

To conclude,

If the Goſpel affords any ſmall encouragement to them that repent upon a Death-Bed; yet it gives no man any at all to deſer, and put off his Repentance till then: He is guilty of great folly and preſumption that ſhall do ſo. In this wilful deferring of our Repentance, we do greatly provoke Almighty God, not to grant us the benefit of this remedy at laſt. How juſtly may God ſay to ſuch a man then, as *Wiſdom* ſpeaks, *Prov.*1 24,25,26. *Becauſe I have called, and you have refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hands, and you would not regard me; but have ſet at naught all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: Now you ſhall call, and I will not anſwer; and though you ſeek me early, you ſhall not find me.* He may moſt juſtly cut a man off in his Sins by a ſudden Death, and not give him any warning or ſpace to repent: He may very juſtly put an end to our days by ſome ſuch Diſeaſe as ſhall hinder our Repentance; He may very juſtly give a man up to a final hardneſs, and ſo let him die in his Sins who would needs live in them. And he may let the Sinners remorce and trouble be, as his falſe heart enclines to make it, but falſe and diſſembled. Such as cannot amount to a true Repentance, and then all his Cries and Tears, all his Vows and Proteſtations ſhall be vain and not accepted; But he ſhall go to feel what he fears, and from the torment of fearing that he is undone, to that of finding he is ſo. Theſe things may in God's juſt Judgment befall him, who had

had much time given him to repent in, who was often called to it by Miniſters and Friends, and perhaps warned by ſome Afflictions, but would needs put it off to the End of his Life. And when God cuts off ſuch a man in his carriere of Sin, without giving him ſpace to reform his Life, it may well be ſuſpected he has rejected all the Sorrows, Vows and Proteſtations that attended his departure. It is not a favour promiſed, that a man ſhall have the grace of Repentance given him then, who has refuſed it often before. Though God out of his Sovereign grace, may give a good and ſafe Death to him that has lived all his Life wickedly, yet he has no where bound himſelf to this; he has not given us any expreſs or intimated allowance to depend upon, or expect any ſuch favour: And then it is altogether unreaſonable to expect it. Let us then to make ſure that we ſhall die the Death of the Righteous repent while we are in health, and may have time to prove the truth of our Repentance in a good Life, and ſo to aſſure the acceptance of it with God. Let us repent when we are called to it, and when the grace of God is ready to aſſiſt us, and to give us a true Repentance: Let us endeavour to live the Life of the Righteous, for as long time as we can before we come to die, and then we ſhall be ſure to make a good End. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

THE

THE PRAYER.

O Moſt Holy, and moſt righteous Lord our God, the Judge and Governour of all the World; thou loveſt Righteouſneſs and hateſt Iniquity. With ſhame and ſelf-abaſement we preſent our ſelves before thee at this time, who are vile Earth and miſerable Sinners. Who have broke thy Laws, and done evil againſt thee what we could; who have followed the corrupt Inclinations of our Natures, and the evil Cuſtoms and Practices of the World, rather than the way of thy juſt and good Commandments. If we ſhould ſay we have no Sin, we ſhould deceive our ſelves and the Truth were not us: We therefore humbly confeſs our Sins before thee, which it were in vain for us to endeavour to conceal from thee: for we know that to the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgiveneſſes, tho' we have rebelled againſt thee. Thou art he, who delighteſt not in the Death of a Sinner, but had rather that he ſhould turn to thee and live. We thank thee; O Father of Mercies, that thou alloweſt us the benefit of Repentance, we bleſs thee for the great Propitiation; Oh that Men would praiſe the Lord, for his Goodneſs towards the Children of Men, whom he has not excluded from all hopes of Favour and Mercy, as he has done the Apoſtate Angels. And we give thee moſt humbly and hearty Thanks, O Lord, for thy Goodneſs to us in particular, who are here before thee. In that thy Forbearance and Long-ſuffering, does yet afford us ſpace and time for Repentance, that we are not now at this time among the Damned in Hell, as we have greatly deſerved to be; that we have time allow'd us to conſider our ways, and turn our Feet unto thy Teſtimonies;

nies; that we have ſpace to ſecure our Repentance; to practice it and to enjoy the Comfort of it, to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. Lord if we are truely grieved for our Sins paſt, we muſt needs be greatly deſirous of leading a new and different courſe of Life, from that we have ſometime done.

Give us therefore, we pray thee, the Grace of true Repentance, and let us have that to praiſe thee for, added to all thy other Goodneſs towards us. Make us to know in this our Day the things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes; ſuffer us not to harden our Hearts againſt the Invitations and Warnings of thy word. Let all of us that are here preſent be ſeeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is nigh; and without delay, let us betake our ſelves to repent and turn to thee; to mortifie all carnal and corrupt Affections, to ceaſe from all Evil and to Good. Make us, O Lord, ſeriouſly to conſider the great uncertainty to us, of what is to come; let us not preſume upon thy Mercy, and ſo encourage our ſelves to continue in our Sins, leſt we thereby put an end to the Exerciſes of thy Mercy towards us: Let us not be ſo fooliſh as to provoke thee by our unneceſſary delays, to cut us off by a ſudden and untimely Death, or to Doom us to a final and judicial Hardneſs: let us not put off our Repentance to ſuch a time, as is not convenient to do it in, or to ſuch a time, when we are likely to be deceiv'd and impoſed upon, by our own falſe Hearts in the doing it: but make us now to ſet about it, while thou calleſt us to it, and art ready to aſſiſt us, and to make us ſincere, and art certainly willing, and ready to accept it. O Lord, thy ready Grace ſhould find us always ready to receive it; and thy pardoning Mercy ſhould find us always ready to ſeek it. Let this, O Lord, we pray, be the Day of thy Power upon every one of us, and make us willing to renew our baptiſmal Covenant now, to devote our ſelves to thee

again,

again, and to reſolve, that we will not henceforth live to our ſelves but to thee, to make thy Holy Laws the rule of our Actions, and to endeavour in all things, to Honour and Glorifie thee. And do thou Graciouſly accept us according to thy Promiſes declared unto Mankind in Chriſt Jeſus, and give ſtrength and ſtability to theſe our Reſolutions. Extend we humbly beſeech thee, thy Goodneſs to all the Heathen and Infidel Nations: let a mighty and powerful Call go forth among them, and turn them to the knowledge of thee the only true God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent. Be mindful of thine ancient People the Jews, and bring them to the acknowledgment of the true Meſſiah. Pour out an abundant meaſure of thy Spirit upon thy Church, that we may ſee and underſtand what is evil among us, and may repent and do our firſt Works. Lord in thy Mercy reform theſe Nations wherein we live, from Atheiſm and Profaneneſs, from Pride and Schiſm, from Envy and Malice, and all Uncharitableneſs, from Luxury and Riot, and Sloth and Idleneſs, Uncleanneſs and Intemperance. Let us not go on to provoke thee by theſe our Sins, leſt our Iniquity prove our ruine. We pray thee, to Bleſs abundantly our King and Queen, and all that are in Authority under them in Church and State, make them a Terrour to all that is evil, and a Praiſe to them that do well, that we may be all Happy, in a great increaſe of Vertue, and true Godlineſs amongſt us. Bleſs all our Relations, and Friends, and Acquaintance, and keep their Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. In whoſe Name we humbly beg the Mercies of the Night, we thank thee for thoſe of the Day paſt, for all that we have received, and for our good hopes of more to come: To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour and Glory, World without End.

Our Father, &c. X

FINIS.

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Joſhua 24. 15. — *As for me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

Deut. 6. 6, 7. *And theſe words which I command thee this day ſhall be in thine Heart.*

And thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and ſhalt talk of them, when thou ſitteſt in thine Houſe. ——

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